YOU DREAM:
Youth Organizers Unifying Detroit and Reclaiming Education by Any Means

by

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Dedication

YOU DREAM is dedicated to my guardian angels, my parents, Peggy Ann Conley and Gary Steven Wilson who are forever living within me. Also, this dissertation is dedicated to the young people of Detroit. The "Detroit V. Everybody" folks who despite what the larger society may think, Detroit has always been, and will forever be, a place of love, joy, and resistance. The youth a part of this study and the YOC—Amirah, Brandi, Dina, Fatima, Joe, Kendra, Nina, Sky, Xiomara and Zara—y'all are the reason this dissertation is a thing and you all will forever be a part of my heart. With love and in solidarity always!

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"The proof is in the puddin"- Peggy Ann Conley/Ma

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Abstract

Within youth activist research in education, scholars have highlighted the importance of racial and ethnic identities in youth organizing but have yet to explore how organizers' identities are developed and influenced when in community with people who differ from them ethnically and racially. Moreover, it is not yet well understood how multiracial-multiethnic coalition building influences youths' decisions about how to organize, how to prioritize the most imminent needs of the different groups involved, and how these dynamics inform the goals of their educational activism that aim to affect change within urban cities. Through a critical qualitative study using ethnographic methods, I sought to understand how Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth organizers for educational justice built a coalition across different racial and ethnic identities and how they made meaning of their community organizing, critical consciousness, and resistance within a Detroit-based intergenerational, multiracial-multiethnic community-based organization (CBO).

To analyze the work of the youth, I utilized interviews, focus groups, and participant observations with 10 youth organizers. I leveraged a conceptual framework that integrated a social justice youth development (SJYD) lens, resistance theory, and a relational race frame. Using my noted methods and conceptual framework, I found that the youth organizers employed relationship-building as a key tactic for coalition building. In this, they created a family-like coalition where they learned more about one another personally, culturally, and politically to further their rapport, or family-like atmosphere, and enhanced their organizing. Together, young

people were able to understand their shared struggles, as well as their neighborhood-specific needs, through the YOC and they harnessed these learned synergies to advocate for educational equity across Detroit.

I situate five fluid principles that youth of color enacted to coalition build in a multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing collective. I posit that young people of color build greater collective organizer identities in their multiracial-multiethnic organizing through what I term a *Synergistic Collective Critical Consciousness* (SCCC) that bridges SJYD, youth resistance, and a relational race frame with principles I name as collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, holistic striving, elevated centering, and Combahee solidarity. Together, these fluid principles articulate how youth organizers of color within a multiracial-multiethnic collective account for all of the various intersections and dynamism of being a youth organizer, youth of color, student, and child within urban spaces.

This study further asserts that youth have always led social movements to achieve greater justice for society much like that of the influential Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Youth lead in communities, *with* communities, and as a field of education I offer that we all can learn from youth educational leaders who enact equitable practices in their learning from other young people to influence educational equity and change. My dissertation title—*YOU DREAM*—is a statement in and of itself for educational stakeholders to dream just like communities, youth, and their families. It is a call for all of us to dream about an education that is just and equitable for all youth. This dissertation is a dream in and of itself: A dream rooted in the belief that youth organizers of color are some of our best teachers.

Chapter 1 Introduction

"No human is illegal! No justice, No peace, No racist police!" In line with our chants at an immigration justice rally, we—youth organizers, adult allies, and community members—were marching down Jefferson Avenue in July 2019, sweat dripping down our foreheads, and our hands growing tired from holding up our protest signs. As we reached the border between Windsor, Canada and Detroit, white allies built a human chain across border, making visible the solidarity of communities. More than this, these acts constituted the advocacy for Detroit to be a sanctuary city[1], the protection of undocumented communities, and the fight against the national Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids.

As an adult ally in Detroit Vitality[2] (a local grassroots community-based organization in Detroit) I was responsible for making sure that the youth that I brought with me to the protest stayed together. Initially, some of the youth and I were not going to attend the immigration rally after our planning meeting at the local office for our annual summer institute. We did not decide to go until Brandi[3], a Black girl organizer, who I also mentor, asked for a ride home instead of attending the immigrant rally. When I asked her why she was not attending the protest, she told me she needed to finish errands. As a Black woman community organizer, it was then that I decided that we needed to go, and I impressed upon them that as youth activists in a multiracial-

[1] A sanctuary city is "…a city (or a count, or a state) that limits its cooperation with federal immigration enforcement agents in order to protect low-priority immigrants from deportation, while still turning over those who have committed serious crimes" (https://americasvoice.org/blog/what-is-a-sanctuary-city/).
[2] A pseudonym for the community-based organization I partnered with for this dissertation to preserve the anonymity of the organization.
[3] All names of youth and adult allies mentioned in this study are pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of my participants and collaborators.

multiethnic coalition it was important that we went in solidarity for undocumented communities. Additionally, this solidarity had implications for undocumented students' educational rights (as will later be discussed) because as undocumented youth organizer Xiomara often shared within the Youth Organizing Collective (YOC), undocumented rights' and educational equity are synergistic in that they are rooted in access, equality, safety, and justice. Little did I know, this protest right before the 2019 Democratic Party presidential debates taking place down the road in Detroit, would be a life changing moment not only for Brandi, but also for me and my activist-scholar research.

As the traffic was quickly building on the side of the Canadian border, police officers began to arrive and immediately began arresting protestors. In my experience as a community organizer, I knew how to continually assess the danger in case we needed to gather the youth and leave. As I looked around to keep count of the youth, I noticed that Brandi, the young Black girl from earlier, was crying. She expressed her anger in how rough the police were arresting the protesters who sacrificed their safety for the larger cause of immigrants' rights. Later in the summer of 2019, while on a youth organizers panel, she spoke about this experience at the rally and shared that it really settled in her that part of being an organizer meant recognizing that "it's not about *just* your community, it's about everybody." This moment signified to me how much the youth, and in particular Brandi, were recognizing the importance of building people power and being in solidarity with other marginalized communities. Similar to these recognitions, knowledge about the current state of power building across ethnicity and race to advance educational justice is needed for educational research as we often focus on particular demographics in isolation. We can develop much more insightful praxis in schools,

communities, and policy arenas by learning from youth of various ethnic-racial backgrounds who organize together.

Problem Statement

Within the current state of youth activist research in education, scholars have highlighted the importance of racial and ethnic identities in organizing (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Soukameneuth, 2006), but they have yet to explore how these identities are shaped and influenced when in community with diverse, ethnic-racial minoritized[4] peoples (Rivas-Drake, Umana-Taylor, Schaefer, & Medina, 2017). Youth of color are not only influenced by coalition building experiences but working within diverse organizing spaces also impacts which educational efforts the youth choose to lead and how they intersect different educational issues across communities. As the youth embark upon different campaigns, how they develop as individuals and as a collective is important to the field of education. Often, educational researchers partner with specific racialized youth, but we are not as aware of the negotiations that occur when different ethnic-racial youth come together around a common cause and how they organize with one another. We also do not have enough understanding or research centering youth of color labor and how they organize with one another without using white youth as a comparison group or seen as a needed counterpart. It is critical to learn from the vantage points of youth of color about their skillsets as organizers, and how they operate in diverse community politics for educational justice.

While research has shown that identity matters in youth organizing, we are less informed about the negotiations of identity and its influence on youth's sociopolitical development when

[4] The use of minoritized is informed by Stewart's (2013) use of the term as it reflects that a "minority" status is a social construction and often rooted in and utilized as a catchall for deficit conceptions of communities of color. Here, minoritized is understood as a process rather than as a noun (Benitez, 2010; Stewart, 2013).

youth are racially and ethnically diverse. Moreover, we fail to understand the role of multiracial-multiethnic coalition building in youths' decision-making about organizing tactics, navigation of different groups' most imminent needs, and how these dynamics inform the direction of their educational activism to effect change within urban cities. Learning from the work of youth organizers of color is critical to leading the current educational movement in fighting for quality urban education, equitable school funding, and building partnerships with communities for educational transformation. Youth organizers for educational justice are at the forefront of these movements and must be a part of the decision-making on issues that most impact their lives so that our U.S. schooling does not continue to fail, police, and discredit the work and intellect of young people. Thus, this dissertation centers youth of color, their brilliance, coalition building, and strategic thinking and pushes against viewing and treating youth of color as a monolith.

Climate youth activists of color like Mari Copeny, Isra Hirsi, Quannah Chasinghorse and many others, are showcasing facts that have always been true; youth lead social movements and often in diverse coalitions. Youth of color lead in communities, *with* communities, and as a field of education we need to understand and learn from young people who organize to change school contexts because they are the most impacted and often well versed in the complex issues that affect their educational trajectories. Hence, in this study, I conducted a critical qualitative study to center the voices, experiences, and analyses of youth organizers of color. Using ethnographic methods, I specifically sought to understand how a multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing collective of Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth socio-politically influenced one another and utilized strategic cross-cultural coalition building to garner greater educational equity in Detroit. Altogether, youth of color's intellect, organizing, and prominent influence in Detroit

offers a model of power building from which researchers, policymakers, and communities can learn.

The Importance of Urbanicity

The term "urban" has often been used to generally describe and deprecate predominantly, low-income African American and Latinx[5] cities and neighborhoods (Mattis, Palmer, & Hope, 2019). For the purposes of my dissertation, the urbanicity of Detroit is a particularly important focal point because of its diversity and the historical underpinnings and legacies of political movements, disenfranchisement, racism, and isolation (Ewing, 2018; Irvine, 1999; Shedd, 2015; Sugrue, 2005). Wilson (2015) provides an important historical understanding of urban cities where she states, "such cities have historically been vital community spaces for ethnic groups of color, yet they are now identified as 'dying', 'disasters', and centers of 'urban decay' in need of outside rescuing when it comes to their business and educational affairs" (p. 3). Continuing Wilson's argument, while communities of color in low-income urban areas face neglected schools, limited access to democratic participation, and over-policing, there is also so much hope, determination, and resistance to these repressive realities (Boggs & Kurashige, 2012; Ewing, 2018; Howard, 2008; Mattis et al., 2019; Todd-Breland, 2015; Wilson, 2015). Youth organizers of color are an exemplification of this hope as they choose to lead educational justice movements in Detroit to advance equity for their peers and their communities.

Urban-centered research is also on the rise because of the many resistance efforts within communities of color for social justice issues and, now more than ever before, people are electing to move to cities instead of suburban and rural areas (Task Force on Urban Psychology

[5] Latinx is considered to be a gender-neutral term as "…an attempt to create more inclusive and accepting language particularly for transgender and queer folks" (de Onís, 2016, p. 80) and to act as a "…supplement rather than an enforced replacement" (p. 83). While warranted, some Latinx community members argue that the usage of "x" can symbolize "linguistic imperialism" (de Onís, 2016), I use the term for inclusivity purposes.

(TFUP), 2005; Todd-Breland, 2018). According to the Pew Research Center in 2018, urban counties have grown at about the national rate of growth at 13% since 2000 and that urban counties are no longer majority white (Parker, Horowitz, Brown, Fry, Cohn, & Igielnik, 2018). They further state that "whites have become a minority of the population in most urban counties since 2000, while remaining the majority in 90% of suburban and small metro counties and 89% of rural ones" (Parker et al., 2018). Therefore, communities of color are still predominantly the urban population with 53% of urban counties comprised of majority people of color, and the suburbs growing more rapidly with 175 million residents and about 98 million members in urban locales (Parker et al., 2018). In addition to urban centers being diverse, due to the proximity of diverse ethnic and racial communities, urban cities offer the most interaction among intercultural and interracial groups which can lead into, and has led into, collaboration and advocacy cross-culturally (TFUP, 2005). Detroit is one such urban locale that offers cross cultural interaction and collaboration as communities are seeking to build with one another to effect change on many policy levels such as education, racial justice, and immigrant rights. In addition, Detroit, and cities like it, are critical contexts because of residents' desires to be in control of their neighborhoods, their resistance to takeovers across the sociopolitical landscape (i.e., local government and schools), the continual disenfranchisement, and the meshing of these three factors that prompts communities to organize with one another.

Brief Study Context

From November 2016 to February 2018, I was a part of four-year community-based educational activism research partnership[6]. As a graduate student researcher, I collaborated with the youth activists of Detroit Vitality involved in the partnership, and I attended their bi-weekly

[6] I was a part of Dr. Camille Wilson's larger ethnographic project, the CREATE project, as an initial point of contact.

youth organizing meetings. After the partnership ended, I continued my relationship with the youth and the CBO and have worked alongside them as an adult ally since June 2018. Using ethnographic methods, I conducted a critical qualitative study with Black, Latinx, and Arab American youths' cross-cultural coalition building and educational youth organizing. During this study in 2019-2020, there were nine adult allies who served in the Youth Organizing Collective (YOC) structure to help guide the work of the youth as they embarked on their organizing cycle each academic year, including myself. The YOC was comprised of 21 youth who were a part of youth partner organizations across the city of Detroit, and they all met under the umbrella of the YOC in Detroit Vitality. Largely, the partner organizations are demographically representative of the racial-ethnic enclaves in Detroit as they were formulated within the segregated neighborhoods across the city (see Figure 1). Detroit Vitality began with predominantly Black youth and became increasingly diverse where the youth identified as Black, Latinx, and Arab American. All in all, the youth organizers came together throughout the year and strategized their actions within an organizing cycle. The organizing cycle entails four components between the months of September-June: listening, research and strategy, direct action, and evaluation and celebration.

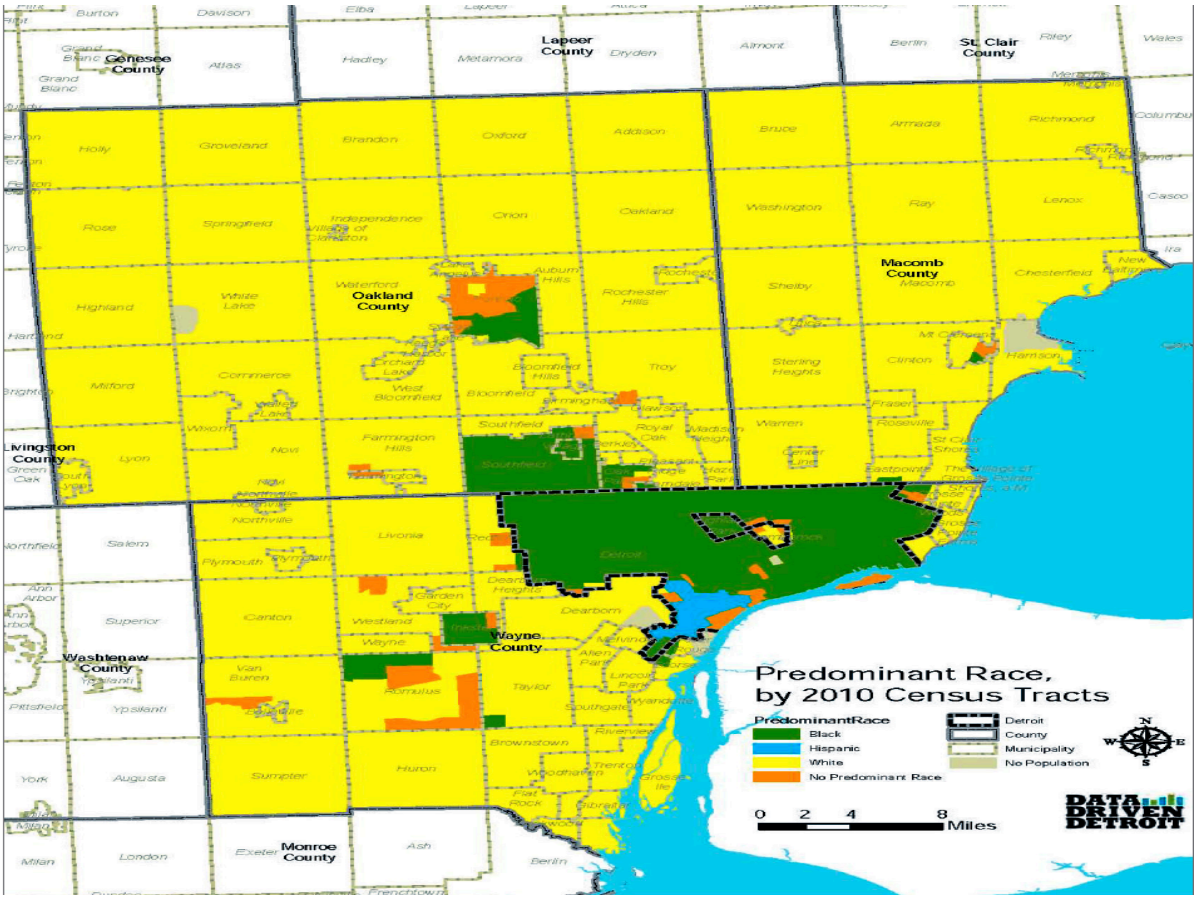

Figure 1-1: The black border around the green area represents the city of Detroit and showcases its racial make-up.

More broadly, Detroit Vitality is an intergenerational, multiracial-multiethnic entity that spans across Detroit. It is comprised of various partner organizations utilizing grassroots organizing to achieve educational justice and equity within the city. While intergenerational, the CBO's YOC is autonomous and has the same coalition building structure as the CBO's parent and community networks. Their coalition building structure is grounded in uniting the different racial and ethnic enclaves and community organizations across Detroit for the shared interest in organizing for educational reforms that would increase school funding and grant more decision-making power to communities of color in the city. The vision and mission for the organization is communicated by the following words from their website: "[W]e are creating a Detroit where every student graduates ready to become a fully engaged participant in the world, equipped with

the character and the capacity to negotiate her environment and change it for the better" (CBO Website, 2019). Their mission as a non-profit, community-based organization is to build power amongst Detroit's residents to advocate and obtain a quality and equitable education for the children of Detroit. Hetrick, Wilson, Reece, & Hanna (2020) highlight the background and impact of the CBO as their data was also derived from the same site as my dissertation. They note:

> Within the context of contested power and responsibilities in Detroit's education policy landscape, the CBO has emerged as a dynamic entity of community organizers, working actively to engage the city's students, families, and community members in educational advocacy and activism. The Detroit CBO, which encompasses a multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual coalition, strives to equip their members with the skills necessary to influence systemic educational reform (Hetrick et al., 2020, p. 28).

The dynamism and influence of Detroit Vitality is, in part, influenced by the work of the youth organizers within the organization, and learning from them as a part of the CBO is critical to my work given the youth's impactful advocacy and access to various education and community stakeholders.

Overview of the City and Education in Detroit, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan was once seen as a thriving metropolis, highly populated, and full of commerce and employment (Sugrue, 2005). Due to neoliberal policies, racist undertakings, and intentional attempts at siphoning Detroit's political power, Detroit has become a locus of deficit narratives and constructions about its disenfranchisement and disinvestment (Khalifa, Douglas, & Chambers, 2016; Sugrue, 2005; Wilson, 2015). Despite this troubling reality, there are still vibrant community members who have not only fought for the life of Detroit but have also

exhibited "…a deep sense of critical care given their involvement…related to seeking social justice in public educational arenas and standing up for inclusion, representation, and the nurturing of Detroit's students' well-being and success" (Wilson, 2015, p.19). As highlighted in Wilson's (2015) qualitative study of Detroit Black women educational advocates, community members and youth serve as important stakeholders in their fight for a representative politic. As a part of their rich activism, this project uplifts how youth organizers of color demonstrate their advocacy and coalition building as diverse ethnic-racial, young Detroiters.

From a political lens, Detroit is in constant strife due to white politicians who seek to constrict resident's democratic participation (Bracey, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Wilson 2015). As an example, Bracey (2015) found that former Governor Rick Snyder in Michigan actively sought to dismantle the voice of the community where he "…eliminated the municipal governments and effective self-governing rights of nearly half (49 percent) of black Michiganders" (p. 565). One of the most nationally known repressive decisions from Snyder has been the emergency manager (EM) laws. Dating back to 1988, with a more aggressive version signed by Governor Snyder in 2011, EM laws were created in Michigan to help "solve" problems in cities with large financial strains such as Detroit and Flint (Hakala, 2016). Dr. Scorsone, a Michigan State University Professor of Economics, argued in a radio interview that "the theory is that the state can do it better…the state can take over the local government and run it better and provide the expertise…" (Hakala, 2016). Yet, these "state actors" never have to be from or present in the city itself. These political maneuvers elucidate the ways in which Detroit's policymakers have excluded, and continue to exclude, youth of color and their families. Yet, this exclusion has not been a deterrent for youth organizers. On the contrary, the continual repression

of youth voice and their families has invigorated youth organizers' work, and their advocacy has spurred their popularity and recognition within the city.

The intersections of the socio-political and economic tensions in urban life is not a new phenomenon and, specifically, it has been ever-present in Detroit. The city contends with the constant assault over their communities from policymakers and policies that are rooted in colonialism and deficit stances (Khalifa, Douglas, & Chambers, 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) argued "the link between urban spaces like Detroit and colonialism is intractable, for even current policies are built on understandings of deficit ideologies and the need for external (mostly White) control" (p. 22). Within schools and the larger city context, over 200 traditional public schools have been closed since 2000, resources have dropped dramatically such as churches and supermarkets, and high rates of poverty greatly impact the wealth of the city (Khalifa et al., 2016; Wilson, 2015). With a district that has 98% students of color and 82% Black students (Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2017), it is not lost upon residents or youth organizers that their work is deeply rooted in race and power. As youth craft their political education around the history of the city and current conditions, youth connect their advocacy to the many inequities in their education and access. The context of Detroit and its schools is directly connected to why, and how, the youth organize as they not only seek the input of their peers, but often root their activism in the power of their stories. As a CBO and organizing group, they harness organizing tactics such as protests and utilize their voice to amplify their experiences within Detroit schools to policymakers and local officials. It is this educational advocacy, rooted in their identities as youth and students in the city, that I emphasize in this dissertation as the youth's stories are also the conduit through which they join with other youth organizers throughout Detroit.

COVID-19 Context and Impact

The continual assault on Detroit became even more steep at the onset of the global pandemic. In March 2020, the day-to-day operations across the globe were halted due to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). COVID-19 quickly became one of the deadliest airborne illnesses of our time and as of May 2021, the virus has been estimated to have taken over 900,000 U.S. lives and nearly 7 million lives worldwide (Sullivan, 2021). This disease caused all in-person meetings, events, and daily routines to be limited in interaction and, in most cases, moved to virtual spaces.

Detroit very quickly made national headlines by becoming one of Michigan's, and the nation's, hotspots for COVID-19 related deaths and infections (Bach, 2020; Joyner, 2020). In April 2020, a little after one month of the pandemic, Black Detroiters made-up for three out of four COVID-19 deaths in the city (Joyner, 2020). Wayne County, where Detroit is located within Michigan had "…more deaths than any other U.S. county outside of New York City" and Black people "…accounted for 33% coronavirus cases in the state, and 40% of the deaths" (Joyner, 2020). The historical racial inequities and health disparities among low-income communities of color were exacerbated by COVID-19. As an example, one of the long running activist agendas in the city was against rampant water shutoffs to low-income residents. In 2020, it was estimated that Detroit homes without running water ranged from 3,000 to 9,000 which provided grounds for rampant spread throughout the city (Joyner, 2020). Additionally, many "essential workers" (i.e., service workers, health care providers, grocery store employees) were employed by people of color (Joyner, 2020). These essential workers became the backbone of our society during the pandemic because although COVID-19 was airborne and highly contagious, people still needed their daily essentials such as going to the grocery store or riding the bus. Due to these jobs being

filled by majority Black communities in Detroit, they were the most likely to contract the disease and die from it.

Detroit community members were grieving, scared because of how much their city was being hit by COVID-19, and yet, were still organizing. In the CBO and YOC, they very quickly became one of the main "go-to" places for information such as with schools' virtual transitions and avenues for members to access COVID-19 tests. The youth were compelled to alter their organizing plans to assist their peers and themselves in gaining more access to educational leaders and technology so they could finish their school year as best as possible. While the aims of my dissertation were not affected, my contexts were drastically altered which provided further data about the stark inequities youth of color had to face and combat in their organizing efforts, even in the midst of a global pandemic. Although I began the beginnings of my dissertation data collection in January 2020, I had collected few data points by the time the pandemic caused everyone, including the CBO, to conduct most operations (i.e., schooling, organizing, events) online. Thankfully, due to my time in the YOC and role as an adult ally, my dissertation did not experience significant delays, but some of my data points were affected. I was able to collect all my data during the pandemic, but my critical qualitative study became a virtual endeavor which was more impacted because of the disparate effects COVID-19 had on communities of color, especially Detroit. Throughout this dissertation, I uplift the youths' incredible passion to fight for educational equity even while they had to endure an enormous amount of stress with the state of their families, swift educational changes, physical and mental health and for some, a loss of all their culminating high school senior year events.

Brief Overview of Research on Youth Activism and Political Youth Identities

As identified in youth organizing research, the core elements of youth activism include motivations to develop power for systemic change (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012), the explicit discussion of racial identities in tandem with the change activists are seeking (Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Rodriguez, 2013; Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Warren et al., 2008), and the nurturing of a shared identity as "youth" across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and location (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005; HoSang, 2006; Kirshner, 2015; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Kwon, 2006; Lewis-Charp & Cao Yu Soukamneuth, 2006). In CBOs, youth "…learn about the social and political structures surrounding their communities so they can set personal experience in relationship to institutional structures. Through working together on common projects, they strengthen their sense of collective identity and build power to achieve their shared agenda" (Warren et al., 2008, p. 30). Youths' particular racial and ethnic identities are also important. As Kwon (2006) situated, "a youth of color identity can be viewed as part of a larger multiethnic organizing movement among people of color around the United States" (p. 220). This youth of color identity is immersed in a larger political identity and is often utilized to form greater alliances amongst youth of color around a shared set of politics for collective action (HoSang, 2003; Kwon, 2006).

Both the criticality and identities of youth activists are integral as they often direct their organizing efforts and channel their desires to seek change within their communities (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Ginwright, 2007). As a part of this criticality, youth organizers in Detroit have implemented past organizing tactics of working and collaborating across different racial and ethnic identities for greater social justice, much like the historic 1968 Rainbow Coalition who created a multiracial coalition with young people among Black, Puerto Rican, and white communities to fight against urban poverty in Chicago, IL (Lopez, 2013; Williams, 2013).

Notably, and as will be discussed throughout Chapters 4 and 5, the collaborations of youth in their multiracial-multiethnic organizing was imperfect. Youth were sometimes met with conflict when their salient ethnic-racial identities were not at the forefront as they deemed necessary, and when the anti-Blackness of some members of the larger Detroit Vitality network of adult organizers impacted the multiracial-multiethnic organizing of youth in the collective. Youth had to navigate such terrain by engaging in difficult conversations with adult allies about the state of the YOC and discussions with their youth peers about the adult leadership of the youth coalition.

Lineage of Youth Organizing

The lineage of youth organizing in the U.S. rests on the shoulders of the giants of major social movements such as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Panther Party, Rainbow Coalition, Young Lords, and the American Indian Movement (Christens & Dolan, 2011; HoSang, 2006; Kirshner, 2015; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Warren, Mika, & Nikundiwe, 2008). Youth were the face of these movements that fought for racial and class equality, and in many instances, they drove the movements forward (HoSang, 2006). Given that youth organizers of color and their multiracial-multiethnic collaborations are the focal point of this dissertation study, the Rainbow Coalition and its coalition strategies have a deeper focus. Born out of the Illinois Black Panther Party (ILBPP) in 1968 (Williams, 2013), the coalition aligned over class struggles within their communities and, in particular, the neighborhoods of the Black Panthers with Black communities, Young Lords in Puerto Rican and Latinx communities, and Young Patriots with working class white communities (Lopez, 2013; Williams, 2013). As Lopez (2013) found the "Rainbow Coalition was a calculated tactic that had little desire to relinquish ethnic identities and self-determination" (p.188), much like the youth of the Detroit CBO who are a part of my study.

As Black, Latinx, and Arab American education organizers, the Detroit youth are aligned in challenging the educational inequities within their city but are not discounting their particular ethnic-racial identities as they are a part of their lived experiences within Detroit's educational infrastructure. Many youth revolutionaries of the 1960s created political blueprints that laid the groundwork of integral coalition building tactics. The 1960s youth wielded political influence as people who led movements, organized cross-culturally, and grounded themselves in political education (Diemer & Li, 2011; HoSang, 2006). These same tactics and grounding are being used to train current day youth activists in the Detroit CBO.

Critical Multicultural Youth Coalition Building

Youth organizers of color in the CBO employ a critical multiculturalism that disrupts the popularity of color-evasive (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017) and blanket multiculturalist approaches. Often, the desire for multiculturalism is superficial and lacks a critical lens of how the socialization of identities shape the lived experience of communities and in turn, their organizing (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Kwon, 2006). Instead, the youth of color in the CBO pursue a critical multiculturalist stance which centers how cultural differences have material effects and analyzes the interconnections of power dynamics and structural inequalities across different groups (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008). Herein, is where the youth of color in the CBO are unique. They are a part of a small group of youth organizers who are recruiting youth across different racial and ethnic identities to fight against educational inequality, like how the Rainbow Coalition was considered the only one of its kind to build coalitions across ethnic-racial divides for their shared issue of poverty in Chicago (Lopez 2013; Williams, 2013). The youth have embarked on three organizing campaigns including advocating for healthier school lunches, decreasing violence around the neighborhood, and their latest campaigns pertained to

increasing funding and getting police out of the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD) and charter schools. They continually enlisted the opinions of their peers on what they wanted to change in their schools via surveys, community town halls, and participatory action research methods. To increase awareness about their organizing they employed "classroom takeovers" tactics whereby they used a part of class time to inform their peers about educational issues and recruited more youth organizers.

Youth Organizer's Critical Consciousness Development

Organizing necessitates political identity development and a critical consciousness. As a part of this necessary learning, youth organizers of color extend and further develop their consciousness within their organizing spaces (Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Mirra & Garcia, 2017; Warren et al., 2014)). As Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) argue, "…social action and critical consciousness are a necessary couplet; that is, acting upon the conditions influencing one's social experience leads to an awareness of the contingent quality of life" (p. 87). The coupling of social action and critical consciousness directs the organizing efforts of the youth as they learn more about systems and critique them, and it informs their organizing campaigns. Connectedly, Vizenor (2014) argues that consciousness is not static and as youth employ their resistance in various efforts, youths' critical consciousness continues to develop and shift. The iterative nature of consciousness is of importance for my project because of the demographics of Detroit Vitality and their coalition building structure. Youth's sociopolitical development is highly informed by the diversity of their organizing environments, political learnings, and current political climate. Detroit Vitality, and much like most organizers, shifts their organizing based on the most imminent needs of community members in the space. For example, while in the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBO had to engage in mutual aid work

across the city and the Black youth in the YOC led the discussions around Black Lives Matter during the summer of 2020. Also, given the disparities of COVID-19's impact on Black communities and undocumented communities, Detroit Vitality (more significantly after summer 2019) engaged in more undocumented rights' struggles (such as the rally in downtown Detroit), and the even greater need for more equitable funding due to the lack of access to technology and quality instruction in virtual learning. The experiences and representation of the Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth in Detroit Vitality not only teach the youth about other community's issues, but also influences how they make pressing campaign decisions.

Specificity of the Youth Organizing Collective's Structure and Trainings in Detroit Vitality

As an adult ally and researcher in Detroit Vitality, I have been a part of the planning and training of the youth for four campaign cycles. Over time, the youth collective has created processes of how they train youth organizers, delegate responsibilities, and enact their campaigns. In the trainings, and as new youth join the CBO, youth organizers enter the summer institute in July of each year where veteran youth review their "train-the-trainer" model and staple "anger + hope= action" workshop, whereby they prepare new youth organizers to leverage their righteous anger about injustices with their hope for change to devise strategies and tactics that will generate more social justice. The train-the-trainer model is rooted in their belief that a good organizer is trained and knows how to build people power which therefore continues a pipeline of organizer mentors and trainers. Those who have been through the workshop must then train other fellow members. In their staple "anger + hope=action," youth teach other young people and community members about combining their anger about the state of the district to hope that the schools can change to fuel their actions to achieve a better school district for their

community. The trainings are intentionally embedded in the organizing cycle as the YOC emphasizes the importance of youth learning from and leading one another.

Structurally, the collective has gone through various changes since they began in 2015. There have been struggles between the adult allies and youth organizers about how much the adult lead versus the youth. In the fall of 2019, they reached a consensus that the adults would support the work of the youth, but the youth lead and choose the issues that will become their campaigns. During this study, the YOC was run by three co-chairs who were elected by the general members of the youth collective. To ensure that there was not a complete turnover, two co-chairs were high school seniors and one co-chair was a sophomore. Coincidentally, each co-chair also represented each predominant ethnic-racial identity of the collective with Black, Mexican, and Yemeni Muslim girls as the leads. In addition to the youth co-chairs, adult allies supported and helped steer the political education. In the summer of 2019, and before the launch of this study, a group of youth and I created a curriculum and training calendar for the CBO that was partially implemented. The calendar was created to connect the political education and necessary tactics for completing an organizing cycle. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we only implemented half of the calendar and the Detroit Vitality network transitioned to mutual aid support for Detroit community members during the initial outbreak. For the YOC, the youth changed their organizing work to advocate for more resources and information to support virtual schooling and bolstered their "counselors over cops" campaign.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

To understand the educational organizing and cross-cultural coalition building of Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth, I forefront a social justice youth development (SJYD) framework developed by Ginwright & Cammarota (2002). Scholars Ginwright & Cammarota

positioned SJYD as a necessary guide for how researchers and practitioners engage youth in developing a critical consciousness to enact social action. I leverage Ginwright's (2010) critical consciousness definition arguing that it is "…a way of understanding the social world through political resistance and freedom" (p. 9). He further stipulates that critical consciousness requires critical assessment and understandings that "…involves preparing young people to confront pressing community problems and shift from individual blame to a consciousness of root and systemic causes of personal problems. This consciousness strengthens individual and collective agency…" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 82). In SJYD, once youth have this consciousness, they are more equipped to be engaged in three ways of awareness: self-awareness, social awareness, and global awareness (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Using Freire's notion of "praxis," the authors articulate that youth can adopt this praxis with the intermingling of consciousness/awareness and action.

Within my conceptual framework, I also incorporate Fine, Tuck, & Yang's (2014) resistance theory to forefront and center youth voice, agency, and experience. Fine et al. (2014) found that resistance theory centered the idea that "…people--educators and young people in particular-- understood in deep, complex, contradictory and embodied ways, the very systems which were oppressing them. Resistance theory recognized that oppression births structural violence but also critical resistance, despair, anger and also desire" (p. 47). Resistance theory allows for the nuance of experience and the complexity of being a youth organizer while also being a child, student, and leader.

As a third complement to my conceptual framework, I link in Molina, HoSang, and Gutierrez's (2019) relational race framework. My study seeks to learn about the hows and whys of youth organizing in a multiracial-multiethnic CBO, and how youth relationally develop their

identity formations of race and ethnicity. As Molina et al. (2019) argue, "relational frameworks…often incorporate but go beyond the logic of comparison to examine the intersections and the mutually constitutive forces between/among what is compared. To study race relationally is to acknowledge the limits of examining racialized groups in isolation" (p. 8). Additionally, a relational race framework incorporates and addresses the interconnections of racialized groups and pushes beyond simple comparison of communities (Molina, HoSang, & Gutierrez, 2019), and stipulates the necessity of finding common cause with those who have been "Othered" in our society to build solidarity and collective power. Also, it is "…learning how to…make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a new world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle to mater's house*" (Lorde, 2015, p. 95). Similarly, the youth organizers in the CBO understand how the inequitable education in their Detroit communities is cross-cutting and tied to other communities throughout Detroit.

Finally, as will be discussed throughout Chapters 4 and 5, in my findings I intersect each aspect of my conceptual framework with how youth engage one another in what I term as five "fluid principles" of collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, holistic striving, elevated centering, and Combahee solidarity. These fluid principles are context specific and not linear where youth of color in the YOC employ these principles to power-build, navigate varying issues, and coalesce to forefront the strength of their differences and shared struggles in their educational organizing. Together, I situate the five fluid principles, SJYD, resistance theory, and the relational race framing into my proposed conceptual framework of a *synergistic collective critical consciousness* that is more fully discussed in Chapter 6.

During my study, it was not my desire to compare the youth with one another, but instead to learn from them and with them about how their sociopolitical development and organizing tactics were informed by their relational work with different racially and ethnically identified youth. In this learning, I made sure to ask follow-up questions to the decisions they collectively made, sought greater understanding in meetings with them when there seemed to be conflict, and assisted in the youth's political education by co-facilitating workshops with them and sometimes as a sole facilitator. Altogether, SJYD, resistance theory, and a relational race framework proved to be necessary lenses to capture the heart of my study.

Research Design: Blueprint of the Dream

My dissertation study embodies a youth resistance methodology. Guishard & Tuck (2014) argue that youth resistance methodologies must include and hold center "…young people's viewpoints, their critique," and that, "their ideas about possible actions [are] respected and change the very methods and directions of research, throughout the life of a research project" (p. 187). In this study, I leveraged this methodology in how I documented the youth organizers' interactions with one another (i.e., asking for their feedback about a situation in moment; not including particular personal moments to protect what they wanted to share) and prioritized what they wanted this research to impact and what they wanted to personally offer to the wider public as a result of this study (i.e.,, sharing their dreams for schooling and to have an influence in policy decisions). Here, methodological resistance is in establishing that youth's analyses and desires are at the center of this research and is collaboratively constructed in the ways that youth wanted their experiences and voices to be leveraged. Resistance in these ways is also aligned with youth resistance methodologies in that youth critique is understood as transformative because "…it unleashes new methods, new theoretical frameworks, new ways of seeing things,

and new ethical positions…" (Guishard & Tuck, 2014). These understandings were also integral to my analysis. Altogether, this dissertation's development was greatly informed by youth of color feedback and is dedicated to them.

Furthermore, this critical qualitative dissertation strives to disrupt the status quo and shed light on the "...obscure operations of power and control" that the youth organizers are challenging (Madison, 2005, p. 5). The four research questions guiding this dissertation are:

1. How do youth of color who participate in an urban multiracial-multiethnic community-based organization, come to understand and describe their organizer identities?
2. How do the goals and structure of a multiracial-multiethnic, community-based organization inform and advance youth of color's coalition building?
3. How do youth education organizers understand and navigate points of ethnic-racial intersections and tensions?
4. How does the coalition building structure of an organizations' youth organizing collective influence how youth of color make meaning of their resistance, critical consciousness, and activism?

My first research question seeks to learn from youth of color who have intentionally joined a multiracial-multiethnic coalition to advance educational justice in Detroit. The youths' organizer identities are also critical as they are in key adolescence where their "…battles to publicly weigh in on social and political issues require that they transgress the line between citizens-in-training and actual political actors with voices and presence" (Gordon, 2007, p. 636). My second research question seeks to understand the influence, if at all, of the YOC's multiracial-multiethnic structure on the youth's organizing. My third question nuances the complexity of youth

organizing in multiracial-multiethnic coalitions. For example, some of the complexity can be about which issues the youth choose to advance in an organizing campaign or what political knowledge they privilege within their training workshops. The youth's complicated navigation of striving to be equitable and just across their different ethnic-racial identities can be cumbersome and also a promising learning opportunity for building diverse coalitions. Finally, my fourth question is summative as it seeks to understand how the coalition building structure of the youth collective influences the sociopolitical development of the youth who actively participate. This final research question derives from seeking to learn how the intentionality of building a multiracial-multiethnic coalition may lead to a more nuanced understanding of how youth of color navigate forming alliances with one another to generate educational equity in urban cities. As noted earlier, learning from the expertise of youth organizers of color can inform how the field builds and sustains strategic and equitable partnerships between communities and educational stakeholders who share the common desire to reform urban education.

My critical qualitative dissertation project is rooted in community and an ethical responsibility to be reciprocal. My title, YOU DREAM, is a call to action for educational stakeholders to dream just like communities, youth, and their families. It is a call for all of us to dream about an education that is just and equitable for all youth and my dissertation is a dream in and of itself. A dream rooted in the belief that youth organizers of color are our best teachers. As the prominent scholar of global Black social activism Robin Kelley argued, "social movements generate new knowledge, new theories, new questions. The most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression" (Kelley, 2002, p. 9). As these youth of color organizers seek to revolutionize their education with one another, it would behoove us as a field to not only learn

from them but also engage youth in ways where they a part of the decision-making within their neighborhoods.

Dissertation Outline

To unpack and highlight the work and dreams of these youth organizers, I will further situate this project in the literature in Chapter 2. I delve into the research of youth organizing, multiracial-multiethnic coalition building, and youth resistance. Following my literature review, I extend my initial introduction of my conceptual framework foreshadowed in Chapter 1. In Chapter 3, I delve into my methodology and critical ethnographic methods of interviews, focus groups, participant observations, and virtual data points post COVID-19. In Chapters 4 and 5 I uplift the ways youth generate synergies in their organizing for themselves and with one another as a part of their organizer and collective development, coalition building, and resistance. Finally, I conclude my Chapter 6 with analysis and discussions of how youth organizers provide a blueprint for how to garner greater educational justice in urban centers that is inclusive and centered on communities' of color relationship-building, knowledge, care, strategies, and wisdom. I suggest how examining their efforts through what I am terming as *synergistic collective critical consciousness* can help us better understand the contexts, processes, and intellect of multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing and provide fruitful avenues for how best to collaborate with, and for, those who are most impacted by urban educational inequity.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Youth Organizing, Multiracial-Multiethnic Coalition Building, and Youth Resistance

Youth organizing and activism have a long history of leading change across the globe and, in particular, the United States (Ginwright, 2010; HoSang, 2006). Confronting social justice issues via activism and organizing has a prominent history in communities of color in urban areas as it has often been the only avenue for which communities could achieve justice (Ginwright & James, 2002; HoSang, 2006; Kirshner, 2009). Educational activism has an even more salient history because education is commonly viewed as the means in which one can be realized as a democratic citizen with inalienable rights (Anderson, 1988; Todd-Breland, 2015). Within social justice movements, and by communities of color, a quality and equitable education has been a reoccurring fight for over a century (Anderson, 1988; Ewing, 2018; Scott, 2011; Todd-Breland, 2015). This fight has been rooted in the deep belief by communities that an education can liberate, shape one's consciousness, and be a determining factor in the advancement of a person (Anderson, 1988; Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005; Siddle-Walker, 2000). Given the importance of education and its impact, youth activists have also adopted this ethos and applied it to their advocacy efforts.

Youth of color in urban centers are often forced to bus out to some semblance of quality schools outside of their communities or are situated within neighborhood schools that have been disenfranchised and have had long legacies of educational inequality (Scott, 2011). While the famous 1954 *Brown v. Board* case that outlawed de jure segregation is represented as one of the bastions of change in our society, scholars have well documented the costs of desegregation on

African American communities (Dumas 2013; Siddle-Walker 2009). Some of the costs incurred were the loss of the Black teaching force, lack of diversity in the curriculum, and Black students being bussed out of their home communities in order to access "quality education" (Anderson, 2006; Siddle-Walker, 2000; Wilson, 2014). As Wilson (2014) articulated in her article about African American mothers' leadership post *de jure* segregation, "…mandatory desegregation resulted in the decrease of African American teachers; the bussing of African American students to hostile and unsafe schools; and/or the weakening of community bonds in African American neighborhoods that once benefitted youth" (p. 2). The hostile and unsafe school climates that Wilson referred to is still part and parcel of schooling today where urban youth do not have opportunities to access an equitable education in their neighborhoods. Due to some of the aforementioned issues with the long history of lacking access to quality education in urban cities, young people are navigating and negotiating how they not only operate within these schools but also what, if at all, they can do to address these educational injustices. As Gadsden, Johnson, & Rahman (2019) describe, "young people residing in urban, inner-city settings…make daily determinations about their present and future selves and efficacy within the shifting dynamics of their homes, communities, and society at large" (p. 82). These contexts, youths' determinations of social justice, and access to a network of like-minded community members influence youths' advocacy and activist efforts. In Kirshner's (2009) assessment of the history and landscape of youth organizing, he found that

> youth organizing…offers a way for urban youth of color to become visible as legitimate public actors. Through interaction with public officials and community members they generate a kind of power in numbers that challenges powerful social constructions of urban youth as vulnerable or apathetic. (p. 434)

Once urban youth of color decide to organize, their civic engagement and influence can drastically alter institutions, policies, and their communities (Ginwright et al. 2005; Kirshner, 2009; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2012).

To better locate the work of youth organizers in this chapter, I first delve into the research on youth organizing that is described within the scholarship on community organizing. Given my research questions, I hone in on the youth organizing literature with a particular ethnic-racial focus. I then highlight the multiracial-multiethnic community-based organizations and coalition building literature and highlight youths' multicultural coalition building. Given that a part of this dissertation's focus is on the sociopolitical development of youth activists, I bridge relevant discussions of political education and youth's defining of shared struggles in organizing spaces found across the research on youth development, youth resistance, and youths' critical consciousness. Finally, I conclude by offering a conceptual framework that will guide my data analysis by linking a social justice youth development framework to theories of youth resistance and relational race framing.

Youth Organizing within Broader Community Organizing Movements

Youth organizing has long been a location of hope for people who may have lost faith in governments, states, and countries that have abandoned them. Since the mid 1900s, young people have asserted their agency against systemic injustices through activism to help lead the U.S. to more justice and equality (Ginwright, 2010; Kirshner, 2015; Kwon, 2013). As noted by Noguera & Cannella (2006), "…many social movements in the United States and elsewhere have relied heavily upon strategic resistance among young people" (p. 336). This "strategic resistance" is built in community with young people where they are trained by one another and adult allies to be critical of the ways in which they are experiencing many facets of racism and

oppression, and to alter power and create meaningful change in the communities they call home (Warren, Mika, & Nikundiwe, 2008). In Warren et al.'s research of Boston and Baltimore youth organizers work towards school reform, they found,

> As young people build relationships, talk with each other about their values and the issues they face, they build some shared understandings and a sense of common interests. Through educational programs and their own research, they learn about the social and political structures surrounding their communities so that they can set personal experience in relationship to institutional structures. Through working together on common projects, they strengthen their sense of collective identity and build power to achieve their shared agenda. (p. 30)

Together, youth organizers work to build justice and towards a true democracy wherein the most marginalized are heard and served.

In the literature, youth organizing has been named numerous things that all result in the advocacy, tactics, criticality, and justice of predominantly young people of color (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2018). The foundations of youth organizing has been traced across time to incorporate young people of color who have grown tired of the injustices within their lives as it relates to their race, gender, sexuality, and class (Ginwright, Cammarota & Noguera, 2005). As Ginwright et al. (2005) found in their work of youth of color organizing in educational institutions,

> although youth of color are often the target of ineffective and misguided policy, they respond to these obstacles by organizing their peers and/or by forming coalitions with adult allies. In a democratic society, young people play a vital role as civic actors and--

> through participating in policy development-- can continue to develop more effective practices in their schools and communities. (p. 33)

Young people choose to enact their agency via collective action and organizing their peers with a critical lens on the social justice ineptness of the U.S. This ineptness can be conceptualized in various ways such as rampant educational inequality in low-income urban neighborhoods, over-policing of students of color, and the constrictive democratic participation of communities of color (Children's Defense Fund, 2014; Howard, 2008; Irvine 1999; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Shedd 2015). These lived realities have inspired critical action from the youth who want change for themselves, their communities, and greater society.

Importantly, this dissertation is solely focused on the work of youth organizers of color therefore I use the terms youth, youth of color, and young people which all indicate the identities of the youth who were a part of this study, as well as the rich history of youth organizing and activism. Particularly, this study pays homage to historic Black liberatory traditions and freedom struggles that have been instrumental to the foundation of activism and organizing (Kelley, 2002; Singh, 2005). Such liberation efforts included the advocacy for universal schooling, antilynching campaigns, the fight for desegregation, and the Black Power Movement, to name a few (Anderson, 1990; Kelley 2002; Raiford, 2011; Singh, 2005). These legacies of Black freedom struggles, in all its manifestations, have provided the blueprint to how modern Black youth approach organizing and activism. Currently, As Kwon (2013) found in her work of non-profit organizations of youth work, mostly high school-aged youth of color — pointedly African American, Asian American, and Latinx youth— are in community-based non-profit organizations who support their racially conscious and liberatory activism. Hence, this project unapologetically highlights how current youth organizers of color are standing on the shoulders

of youth of color activists throughout our nation's history; the youth who resisted dehumanization and ill-treatment based on their various statuses but remained overall influential powerhouses that have pushed this country to live into its democratic ideals. Finally, as this dissertation is grounded in the brilliance and skillsets of youth organizers of color, this first section was curated to address the foundation of youth organizing in community organizing, youths' efforts as the main stakeholders in organizing, and a nod to the work of adult allies who support their advocacy. To conclude this section, I briefly highlight the endemic nature of whiteness and white supremacy and its implications for youth's educational organizing. I later argue in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 white supremacy produces and maintains the inequitable education that Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth are organizing against.

Background of Community Organizing

According to Ohmer & Brooks (2013) review of community organizing in the field of social work, it is a "'process' of helping communities join together to identify and solve problems…usually tied to empowerment, which focuses on strengthening communities and enhancing their ability to control their own destiny" (p. 2). Ohmer & Brooks identified consensus and conflict approaches as two different practices of community organizing. They argue that although organizing is not simply limited to these two practices, they stipulate that the two approaches are helpful to understand how organizing has historically been utilized to produce change. Drawing from Rubin & Rubin (2005), they assert consensus organizing is "…accommodationist approaches, which bring together community members, government, and businesses to work together in partnership on shared projects" (Ohmer & Brooks, 2013, as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In conflict community organizing approaches, it is defined as "…social action approaches, which focus on confrontational strategies, including boycotts, sit-

ins, protests, picketing, and sabotage" (Ohmer & Brooks, 2013, p. 2). Again, authors Ohmer & Brooks urge against cementing such duality, but found that these definitions provided a fruitful foundation for understanding the work of organizing at-large.

Additionally, conflict and consensus approaches to organizing have been assessed as understanding power differently. Conflict approaches, which is also referred to as direct action organizing "…assumes that people in positions of power typically do not easily or willingly share or concede their power unless they are pressured in some way" (Ohmer & Brooks, 2013, p. 5). Whereas consensus, or what is sometimes called accommodationist approaches (Ohmer & Brooks, 2013) emphasize "…engaging a broad range of key stakeholders in solving problems by fostering harmonious relationships among people" (p. 6). In most organizing, activists engage both approaches in their initiatives such as the Black Panther Party (BPP) during the 1960s who would arm themselves with guns to protect themselves from white supremacists, while also leading lobbying efforts, such as swaying the opinion of Oakland City Council to acquire traffic lights at an intersection where children in the community had been struck by oncoming traffic (Abcarian, 2016). Here, the merging of conflict and consensus approaches were utilized to achieve the aims of the BPP.

In addition to conflict and consensus approaches to community organizing, social work scholar Resich argues for an even more specialized terming of organizing that pursues eradicating root causes of injustices. Reisch (2013) in his terming of "radical organizing," argues that organizing should not be assumed as all "radical" because not all community organizers seek to promote egalitarian goals or seek drastic changes to society. In his distinct definition of radical organizing, Resich (2013) argues it is,

> a form of community practice that encompasses a dynamic set of theories, goals, ideologies, values, strategies, and tactics that seek to achieve a more egalitarian, open, and socially just world through the creation of fundamental structural, institutional, ideological, attitudinal, and behavioral changes in communities, societies, and individuals. (p. 2)

In this way, radical organizing represents a critical analysis of current capitalistic institutions which Reisch contends is the root of most individual and social problems. Therefore, to address such injustices, a major redistribution of resources is needed. Reisch (2013) points towards radical organizations of color such as the Center for Third World Organizing, which is focused on "…direct-action organizing in communities of color, engages in race-based analysis of local and global issues…" (p. 4), and has created training models to add to the number of "race-conscious organizers of color" to eradicate the root causes of oppression. One important note from Reisch is that the context of what is considered radical is ever changing within society. Actions such as sit-ins, boycotts, and strikes were once considered quite radical to some, just as modern society may consider current Black Lives Matter protests or #FreePalenstine endorsements as too radical because ultimately these movements seek to redistribute resources and obtain ultimate liberation.

Community Organizing Enmeshed in the Conflicting Contexts of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). While the work of CBOs is incredibly important, they are not without fault or the influence of larger structural issues. Kwon (2013) found in her book about the history of philanthropic foundations and non-profit community-based organizations, that CBOs are often rife with clashes of priorities and funding. Often, funders' concerns influence the work and direction of CBOs (Kwon, 2013). For instance, Kwon (2013) discovered interconnections of

philanthropy and the rise of youth activism and found, "the interest that the Carnegie report aroused in philanthropic circles in youth community programs significantly shaped the youth of color organizing movement that arose in the 1990s" (p. 45). Foundations were steadily increasing funding for youth activism and, in this, were shaping the agenda setting of youth via the mandates of their funding. Philanthropists decisions on what they choose to invest in come with particular requirements in order for CBOs to receive funding. While an investor or philanthropist may be interested in funding education organizing, they may only be interested in one avenue of organizing such as for arts education or through community gardens which often reflect palatable changes (Kwon, 2013). Moreover, the political climate of "small government" has positioned CBOs as the catchall where responsibilities have shifted from state governments to marginalized communities (Kwon, 2013; Terriquez, 2015). Youth organizing (YO) groups "…like other non-profits today, operate in a neoliberal era in which responsibilities of the welfare state have increasingly shifted to individuals and communities" (Terriquez, 2015, p. 226). Given the heavier load to provide material supports in addition to the work of activism, often non-profits/CBOs are left having to balance their campaigns with serving the needs of their community members (Kwon, 2013; Terriquez, 2015). Fulfilling all these priorities and objectives can burnout CBOs and make their advocacy, and relationship-building more difficult to prioritize (Medina, Baldridge, & Wiggins, 2020).

More recent scholarship has conceptualized how non-profits are too often subsumed under the larger prison-industrial complex, thus making a non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) (Rodriguez, 2017). According to Rodriguez (2017), the NPIC is "…the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent

progressive and leftist social movements…" (p. 22). Detroit Vitality is also within this complex where "…the power and influence of foundation funding, and the relationship of both to social change organizations present complex and challenging questions for the movement" (Pérez, 2017, p. 91). Hence, youth organizing in Detroit Vitality is impacted by these structures wherein it has put some youth and adult allies in conflict due to varying competing, issues, needs, and supports. The context and tensions of CBOs are important to highlight because the youth organizers of my study are enclosed in it and have also dealt with similar issues of funding and balancing priorities. In the same vein, as data will later speak to, youth of color have created supportive and familial havens in Detroit Vitality and continue to persist because it is one of few outlets where they are humanized, centered, and can fight for a better educational system in Detroit.

Youth of Color Organizing within Community Organizing

Youth organizing is community organizing but the difference is the terming of "youth." In this section, I foreground the work of youth organizers and their tactics as opposed to the general discussion of community organizing. Most prominently, when one thinks of youth organizing, scholars often first reference the work of Black youth from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Throughout the 1960s, SNCC came to be known as one of the most impactful organizing efforts of young people of color that fought for desegregation and ultimate racial equality for Black communities (Crass, 2013). SNCC comprised of Black youth and college students in the South who grew tired of racism and sought to garner equal rights for Black communities through non-violent tactics. After being corralled to organize more effectively together by prominent activist Ella Baker, SNCC participants focused on building relationships with one another and their leadership (Hogan, 2019). Most important to their

mentor Baker was the understanding that "strong people do not need strong leaders," and therefore, it was the work of activists to concentrate less on one sole leader and more on training each other so that all could advance social change (Hogan, 2019). These historical roots of powerful youth leaders have proven to be quite influential given the current make-up of youth organizing that encourages young people to cultivate relationships with one another and to be critical and politically educated (Crass, 2013; Hogan, 2019).

Bautista (2018) in her dissertation about the transformative organizing of youth of color, painted a historical backdrop of the various movements led by youth of color. In 1961, Native American youth came together to form a council to bring together other similarly identified young people for what came to be known as "Red Power" (Bautista, 2018). Referencing Muñoz (2007), she highlighted the 1968 school walkouts led by Mexican American youth in California who fought for self-determination and launched the Chicano Power student movements (Bautista, 2018). Right alongside Mexican American and Native American youth were Black youth who, as noted earlier, drove some of the tactics of sit-ins such as at segregated lunch counters in the South. Altogether, these youth drew on their racial ethnic identities and analysis of society to build a larger movement that helped guide the activism of youth today.

In current times, Warren et al. (2008) found that most youth organizing efforts have "… centered among youth of color, who also draw from the traditions of youth participation in the civil rights movement and the Chicano movement, among others" (p. 29). Given youth's particular racial-ethnic and class positioning, Terriquez (2014) in her work of Latinx youth activists uplifted that youth "seek to involve low-income, racially diverse adolescents in addressing issues that affect them and their communities, such as the criminalization of young people of color, unequal school systems, blocked opportunities for undocumented immigrants, or

local environmental health issues" (p. 226). The racial-ethnic identity of youth is most salient as they experience specific pernicious effects of an endemically racist society such as the school-to-prison pipeline that maintains the over-policing of Black and Brown students. Or when, at the expense of Black life, Flint, MI was highlighted in national headlines after predominantly Black communities were fed poisonous drinking water for years with state government knowledge to cut costs in the city (Howell, Doan, & Harbin, 2019; Welburn & Seamster, 2016). Thus, in youths' efforts to alleviate these racialized experiences, they center community uplift, healing, and grassroots organizing that work to alter society (Ginwright, 2010).

Finally, we can look to how young people have adapted and sought after the historical youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, in Hogan's (2019) review of youth activism in the 2010s, she noted the work of undocumented youth activists, also known as "DREAMers", in Arizona. In one of their direct-action efforts, they drew on SNCC tactics (i.e., sit-ins; role playing in preparation for clashes with police at protests) and blocked traffic to a local deportation site. They decided on nonviolent tactics that would garner national attention and utilized their stories of living in the U.S. as undocumented young people to speak to the ways they constantly lived in fear of deportation (Hogan, 2019). Similarly, in Cohen's (2010) book of contemporary current Black youth activism from 2000-2010, she referenced the organizing around the "Jena Six." Sparking national outrage in 2007, six Black boys in Jena, Louisiana were charged with second-degree attempted murder against a white student in a school fight (Cohen, 2010). The deeply seated white supremacy around the fight between the boys was particularly troubling. Some racist instances included white students not being charged or reprimanded for hanging nooses on trees in the school yard or jumping a Black student at a high school party (Cohen, 2010). Instead, the Black youth were the only young people who were

facing criminal charges, which fueled Black communities across the country to stage protests and pursue legal defense advocacy supports (Cohen, 2010). In both accounts, it is apparent how young people of color drew on tactics from elders of older organizing movements to advance their current social justice endeavors.

Adult Allies in Youth Organizing Spaces. Although this dissertation is not focused on the role of adult allies and their relationships to the youth, it is still important to provide a brief overview of their role as they are a critical part of the larger collective organizing. In the earlier 19th and 20th centuries, adult allies (also known as adult "youth workers") were often community members, local activists, educators, and family volunteer members (Baldridge, 2019; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Adult allies have always played a vital role in guiding the work of the youth or supporting the development of the young people in the CBOs that were often outlets from damaging school experiences (Baldridge, Beck, Medina, & Reeves, 2017). Specifically, the role of an adult ally is often multi-layered. In a review of community-based educational spaces, Baldridge et al. (2017) found that "…adults seek to go beyond safe and supportive relationships by creating intergenerational ties that cultivate high expectations and opportunities to engage in social change within their communities… and opportunities for youth to belong" (p. 388). This sense of belonging is cultivated through relationship-building with the youth and non-hierarchical positioning between adults and youth to co-create structures that are humanizing and caring to all those in the space (Baldridge et al., 2017; Fei, Freeman, George, Henderson, & Maxfield-Steele, 2020; Fusco, 2012; Griffith & Jiang, 2020; Torres & West, 2020).

In Baldridge's (2014) analysis of youth workers in an after-school program, she noted, "in most cases, these workers provide a wide range of services, including, but not limited to, academic tutoring, recreational activities, college preparation, social/racial awareness, gender-

specific programming, leadership development, and/or community service and organizing opportunities" (p. 444). Similarly, in our roles as adult allies in the CBO of Detroit Vitality featured in this study, we not only help steer the work of the youth, but we also offer college statement workshops, job support, speak with families to advocate and mend relationships between the youth and their families, and sometimes have housed youth in times of need. These realities are part of the role of adult ally and they are key to how adults and youth in Detroit Vitality are able to cohesively work together. Yet, the work of adult allies should not be romanticized as allies can sometimes derail the efforts of the youth through our heavy hand of organizing, and we are often over-worked, and are ourselves trying to manage many aspects of the work of CBOs with little resources and limited time (Baldridge, 2019). In this dissertation, I sought to uplift the nuanced ways that young people organized with one another, both for the good and in some cases the negative, and adult allies were a part of this dynamic. Therefore, the influence of adult allies, and our limitations, are important to note as adults' mistakes and over-handedness impacted how the youth organized in the collective (Luk, Schuettge, Catone, & Perez, 2020). Nonetheless, both adult allies and youth strived to build communal spaces where all could show up whole and maintain their wholeness while in community with one another.

White Supremacy and Whiteness' Implications in Youth Educational Organizing.

Urban communities and youth organizers are well aware of how their advocacy is inextricably linked to race and power. Due to these realities, I argue, like many other scholars, white[7] supremacist ideology is the foundation to urban youth's inequitable education. Gillborn

[7] In this dissertation I do not capitalize white because, as has been discussed in various organizations including The Associated Press (AP), capitalizing white can signify association with white supremacists capitalization and possibly subscription to these beliefs. Additionally, capitalizing Black and Brown, as an example, is correlate to the culture and shared history across Black and Brown communities where as white is highly contested and does not have the same association or connection (https://blog.ap.org/announcements/why-we-will-lowercase-white).

(2007) cites Ansley's (1997) definition of what the operationalization of white supremacy is outside of its blatant racist nature. Ansley (1997) states white supremacy is

> …a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (as cited in Gillborn, 2007, p. 491)

Also, white supremacy is a mindset. As a mindset, Feagin (2010) provides a useful understanding in his definition of a "white racial frame" (p.1x). He states that the white racial frame is "…the broad, persisting and dominant racial frame that has rationalized racial oppression and inequality and thus impacted all U.S. institutions" (p.1x). The impact that Feagin alludes to is both the operationalization in its action, and the racial framing in its mindset, that are key components of white supremacy.

Here, it is evident that the resources and systemic possessiveness of white supremacy have material effects on minoritized communities. While racism and white supremacy's functioning may be evident to people of color, it is often ignored or unrecognizable to white communities which is part and parcel of the privilege of whiteness. Whiteness allows for the blatant disregard of how whites are structurally privileged in society under the veil of being unaware or happenstance. Feagin (2010) argued, "when such momentous and bloody past is suppressed, downplayed, or mythologized by elites and historians, ordinary Americans, especially whites, understandably have difficulty in seeing or assessing accurately the present-day realities of unjust enrichment and impoverishment along racial lines" (p. 18). This willful ignorance has harsh effects on the lives of low-income youth of color, especially within

education. This study is partly interested in learning if youth utilize this understanding of the function of white supremacy in their education organizing, and if it is salient to their overall meaning making of their organizing.

Youth Organizing and Organizer Identities

In order to understand the ways in which youth have identified as organizers and choose this advocacy, we must first define youth. In this dissertation, I use youth as a referent to students and young people who are aged between 13-18 years old. These youth of color still reside at home with their parents and/or guardians and are predominantly high school students within Detroit's larger educational system. Tuck & Yang (2014) established an important portrayal of youth to undergird their book about youth resistance and activism, which is useful to my study. They stated, "youth is a legally, materially, and always raced/gendered/classed/sexualized category around which social institutions are built, disciplinary sciences created, and legal apparatuses mounted" (p. 4). The development of institutions surrounding youth greatly impact their opportunities and adolescence such as the juvenile justice system (Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013). Additionally, youth who actively participate in organizing efforts hold a particular identity as a youth organizer which then influences their adolescence and the activities in which they involve themselves (Gordon, 2007).

In 2011, the Annenburg Institute of School Reform collaborated with the Alliance for Educational Justice – a grassroots alliance of twenty youth activist organizations throughout the U.S. – to create an issue in the *Voices in Urban Education* (VUE). In this issue they brought together youth organizers, directors of community-based organizations, and academic researchers to bring together work on youth organizing for education reform. One of the articles was by Black youth activist, Jorel Moore. In his piece, Moore (2011) discussed his organizing

efforts with other youth activists to generate a campaign to preserve student subway passes in New York City. In the beginning of his article, Moore articulated that a key part of being a youth organizer is to build power. To Moore (2011), building power meant "bringing people together who are impacted by an issue, doing research to understand the issue better and how it can be solved, creating demands, and making a campaign plan about how we are going to win what we want" (p. 5). In this same VUE issue, researchers of youth organizing Ginwright & Cammarota (2011) drew on data from an ethnographic study with Latinx students who used participatory action research methods to address educational inequalities. In this work, they defined a youth organizer as one who "…brings people together to act toward a common vision" (p.15). Moreover, youth organizers "share the belief the solutions to neighborhood problems come from the power of people to hold institutions, politicians, and corporations accountable to the common interests of the community" (p. 15). Both Moore and Ginwright & Cammarota posit that a part of an youth organizer identity is one who can help build towards greater people power and the notion that change is possible through their organizing and personhoods. As data will later show, these identities and beliefs are a part of the youth organizers' ethos in Detroit Vitality, so I extend these definitions to a collective youth organizer identity among youth of color in a multiracial-multiethnic coalition.

Youth's Civic Identity and Engagement. In the youth activist and youth civic engagement literature there have been debates about how youth enact their citizenship, and if youth—youth of color in particular—are as civically engaged as previous generations of minoritized youth or as much as their white counterparts (Gadsden, Johnson, Rahman, 2019; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). At the core of this debate is scholars' definition of civic engagement and the ways civic engagement should be enacted. For instance, the traditionalist

approach to civic engagement would lend itself to participating in the current political system as is (i.e., voting), while a more radical orientation to civic engagement would be fighting to eradicate the system to redistribute resources (i.e., Occupy Wall Street). Kirshner (2009) defines civic identity as "…a person's sense of belonging to a larger polis and a sense of responsibility to contribute to its health" (p. 415). But, as explored in this study, what if youth want to eradicate the entire polis and create something anew? One that is more fair, equitable, and just towards all people no matter their identity or citizenship status? As Mirra & Garcia (2017) argued in their work on students' use of media for digital civic engagement, "deep exploration of the root causes of racial inequality in this country (the U.S.) requires that educators refuse to force youth to conform to dominant systems of civic participation and instead create space for interrogation and innovation" (p.144). The dominant narratives and ideologies of civic engagement, and what it means to be a citizen, are often rooted in "traditional" and non-resistant forms of participation that maintains the status quo (Mirra & Garcia, 2017). Some of these traditional forms are more widely accepted such as lobbying that voting is the conduit for change and disparaging direct action or protests. Conversely, these traditionally palatable forms do not leave room for how youth of color engage in protest politics, and how they resist and enact their citizenship by being political actors and problem solvers (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Wilson, 2014).

The youth of color in the CBO are a part of larger civic actions to achieve radical changes for their educational systems. Similar to how Mirra & Garcia (2017) saw the work of students of color, the youth of color in the CBO participated "…in civic activities that dive deeper into issues of equity and localized politics and that represent broader contexts for civic action" (p. 145). Their participation in local protests and marches, their attendance at local school board meetings, and meetings with top level education administrators in Detroit are all forms of their

civic engagement that is often not recognized in the "traditional" forms of youth civic engagement literature. Furthermore, Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota (2008) argue "social science research on Black and Latina/o youth has been dominated by studies that focus on 'problem' adolescent behavior" (p. 1). These deficit frames do not account for how urban youth (often synonymous in the literature with youth of color) enact their civic identity through resistance (Akom et al., 2008). As Gadsden et al. (2019) argued,

> as the number and depth of studies on urban youths' civic identity increase, we gain deeper insights into the numerous ways that youths engage in and display their civic identities. Their engagement may differ from many of the traditional patterns of engagement (e.g. questioning their place in society and expectations for change). (p. 83)

Given that politically active urban youth are often fighting against systemic injustices, their engagements are going to drastically differ from a hegemonic and monolithic understanding of citizenship such as voting or reading a newspaper. Instead research has shown, urban youth, much like the youth organizers in Detroit Vitality, are participants in the local politics that have material effects on their livelihoods (Akom et al., 2008; Kirshner, 2015; Kwon 2013; Ginwright, 2010).

Multiracial-Multiethnic Community-Based Organizations and Coalition Building

This dissertation is primarily focused on the way's youth organizers of color coalition-build with one another and its impacts on their personal and political development. Given this focus, it is important to illuminate some definitions and histories of multiracial-multiethnic organizing. In Mizrahi, Rosenthal, & Ivery's (2013) review of coalitions built within community organizing spaces assert,

> Inherent in coalitions is the tension between cooperation (which brings stakeholders together) and competition (which keeps them apart); therefore, coalitions need to operate as a conflict-management model, where trade-offs, negotiation, and bargaining are an integral part of decision making and agreements are reached through compromise and mutuality. (p. 2)

Bringing this lens out, cooperation is more aligned when organizations are working to join forces for a common issue. As an example, created in 1993 and still around to this day, Southerners on the Ground (SONG) is a southern-based queer youth activists group who first "stood as a beacon of innovative organizing for queer youth in the South and across the U.S." (Hogan, 2019, p. 37). The beginnings of SONG laid the foundation for the political work in the 2010s where they collaborated with youth immigrants' rights activists and the Black Lives Matter movement to bridge intersectional organizing among one another (Hogan, 2019).

With regards to competition, tension related to various intersectional social identities can also serve as an opportunity for people with structural power to use a "divide and conquer" approach. In this, the competition or issues can be cultivated within communities of color by outside forces that can dismantle their efforts in building trust and people power (i.e., the U.S. government sponsored COINTELPRO program infiltrating the Black Panther Party to dismantle them and cause division among their members). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created the Counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) in 1956 to investigate communist party activities and expanded their investigations, and violated first amendment rights, to racial advocacy groups in the 1960s (https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro). The BPP was a target of COINTELPRO throughout the 1960s where it has been documented that the program was responsible for spreading lies and planting spies within the organization to discredit BPP and

their activism. In the 21st century, the work of Sojoyner's (2017) theorization of educational enclosures of Black youth is useful as it posits education within Black communities forms an "enclosed place" thus "…a rendering of state capacity that functions to negate alternative social visions presented by Black radical forms of indigenous knowledge" (p. 521). Here, Sojoyner offers that Black radicalism is squelched under the foot of the state, white supremacy, and colonization in that any action or criticality that threatens the capitalist engine of the U.S. must be eradicated. In the YOC, Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth visionaries are under this surveillance and are within an education system that seeks to burn out any fire they and their comrades may have to rebel and curate systems that redistributes resources rooted in justice and equity.

As a part of organizers' tactics to combat outside forces influence and attempts at causing division, Mizrahi et al. (2013) outlined that before coalescing, organizations assess each other's values, social issues, and/or conceptions of the "common good." They pinpoint different types of collaborations such as needing to build coalitions for problem-solving or political actions. For the purposes of this dissertation, their definition of "movement building" collaborations is the most fitting. They define these as coalitions having the goals to "challenge power inequities and injustice and take on ambitious, proactive social change goals" and that, "member organizations may form a base for movements and extend their power by taking on joint campaigns and uniting their efforts into a larger context" (Mizrahi et al., 2013, p. 6). Essentially, when organizations engage in movement building, they develop shared interests among other groups and become a coalition to bolster their organizing and generate more people power. This study's CBO youth organizing collective (YOC) is representative of movement building coalitions, as the collective is comprised of partner organizations who come together to build far-reaching youth power,

support one another's campaigns, and construct a shared struggle of educational inequality in Detroit.

Much like youth organizing, coalition building has many terms in the literature which includes "movement building" and "solidarity." As a part of being in a coalition, groups must have agreed upon their mission and work with one another. Santos (2019) in his analysis of different types of political solidarity within social movements, draws on Durkheim to argue that solidarity is "…the willingness of actors to contribute private resources – time, money, and energy – to the collective ends of a group" (p. 126). This solidarity is part and parcel of an agreement of being tied to another's struggle. For instance, Lauby's (2020) research of undocumented youths' success in social movement coalitions, provides helpful insight into what successful coalitions or partnerships comprise of. She found that "successful partnerships usually rely on factors such as the environment of the collaboration, membership characteristics, specific processes and structures, adequate communication, purpose and most importantly organizational and economic resources" (Lauby, 2020, p. 3). Considering non-profit community-based organizations operating in contentious political spaces and funding, multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing is similarly affected and have to navigate the different elements that Lauby posits. Additionally, Lauby argued that movements increase their impact when they increase their membership and are diverse. This critical representation of diversity and people power can provide legitimacy and further the power of the coalition, garner more attention to their efforts, and continue to increase its membership.

Youths' Multicultural Coalition Building and Collective Agency

A part of the youth organizing movement and culture is the recognition that youth are the most equipped to organize their peers across racial and ethnic lines (Dobbie & Richards-

Schuster, 2008; Lewis-Charp et al., 2006). Ginwright et al. (2005) argued that youth of color are important partners in the work of organizing for educational reform given their ability to coalition-build with one another, and because they are most impacted by the issues they are challenging. They stated,

> Although youth of color are often the target of ineffective and misguided policy, they respond to these obstacles by organizing their peers and/or by forming coalitions with adult allies. In a democratic society, young people play a vital role as civic actors and-- through participating in policy development-- can continue to develop more effective practices in their schools and communities (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 33).

Young people are important stakeholders because they not only live the experiences of the injustices within their schools, but they are also the most the apt to respond and involve their peers. As they embark upon collaborating with other youth throughout their cities, they form a collective. In this, they create collective actions to address various inequities and are informed by their peers, community members, and lived experiences (Akom et al., 2008; Fine et al., 2006; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015). Ginwright & James (2002) defined collective action as "…the process of engagement that seeks to alter existing social conditions through non-institutional means. Often, collective action emerges from groups affected by similar problems and sharing the same social justice vision" (p. 36).

As youth of color lead and construct their organizing campaigns, they critique and assess their environments and how they and their peers are implicated (Akom et al., 2008; Suess & Lewis, 2007). These assessments are critical because they are rooted in their political education which then informs their actions (Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010). The focus on the collective is of particular importance throughout their political development because of how the

youth all learn from each other. Ginwright et al. (2005), in their advocacy for specific policymaking and theories for youth in urban communities, pushed for a different view of the youth development process from the individual to the collective. They stated,

> …our understanding of the youth development process shifts the theoretical focus from individual developmental trajectories to youth as collective community actors. This shift views youth as key agents in community change and conceptualizes communities as dynamic, rather than static, environments (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 33).

As agents of change, urban youth generate a collective identity so that their campaigns are not only impactful, but also have engaged relevant youth who are most affected by their community's plights. For example, Dzurinko, McCants, & Stith (2011) as adult allies of youth organizing groups across the U.S., presented successful case studies of their allyship with Black youth organizers in Philadelphia. One case they highlighted was with Black and Asian youth who worked together to hold their school accountable for funding inequities. The key piece of this case was how the Black and Asian youth were pitted against one another when Black youth were bullying the Asian immigrant youth in the school. In protest of their treatment, the Asian youth held a week-long boycott of the school which led to the media framing the problem as Black versus Asian. Through organizing, the young people coalesced together to get to the root of the issue which they found to be the continual underfunding and disinvestment of their school. Dzruniko et al. (2011) highlighted that the youth wanted to come together as "one voice" and therefore conducted "joint political education" wherein they learned more about each other and organized to acquire more resources for their school.

Together, youth of color generate their campaigns in a process that includes as many stakeholders as possible, but also in equitable ways so that the most marginalized are steering the

actions (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008). In these processes, youth are negotiating challenges of voice and perception (i.e., undocumented youth using their voice for justice while being in fear of deportation). Kirshner (2015) articulated that the development of campaigns in a collective

> …tend to focus on access, participation, and opportunity. They are a combustible mix of imaginative and practical, best described, borrowing from language and literacy scholar Kris Gutiérrez, as 'social dreaming.' Social dreams, in this sense, are dreams for the future that are yoked to a strong collective identity. They focus on creating a better future for oneself, one's peers, and one's family; they are rooted in a strong sense of interdependence with others. (p. 16)

The interdependence of the dreams that youth collectively create is intrinsically tied to who they create their dreams with. As youth co-construct their campaigns they are also learning to dream together.

Multiethnic-multiracial coalition building amongst youth is due in part to the make-up of their contexts and intentionality. As noted earlier, urban spaces are the most diverse and provide the most opportunity for youth to organize across race and ethnicity. Dobbie & Richards-Schuster (2008) argued, "whether across or within organizations, a coalition building framework can illuminate differences and conflict between constituencies within organizations, help activists find unity in diversity, and create a healthy setting for democratic discourse" (p. 332). For instance, some youth organizers only set out to advance multiracial-multiethnic coalition building as an approach to gaining more diverse people power (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Mirra & Garcia, 2017). Building power is a critical point because organizing is not as powerful or impactful when done alone or in small groups. Instead, having a base of people who

are all dedicated to the same causes and can see how their liberation is tied to another's allows for more robust visions and it also builds a critical mass (Brown, 2017). Similarly, Kirshner (2009) found in his ethnographic study of civic identity exploration with Black and Asian American youth, "collective agency reflected a discourse that recognized that social problems, although often experienced at an individual level, were linked to broader societal forces" (p. 422). For instance, Kirshner (2009) learned that youth who were a part of an intergenerational organizing group developed solidarity with youth from different backgrounds, and they believed "…the more people who are involved, the more powerful the effort will be" (p. 425). By learning as a collective, inherently youth are building power. As power gets generated the more powerful the campaign becomes because it is collectively constructed (Ginwright & James, 2002).

Ethnic-Racial Intersections and Tensions. The most important element of multiracial-multiethnic coalition building is the power and influence yielded when representing such diverse identities. Learning from important and influential movements of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s laid important groundwork for how youth of color organize across race and ethnicity (HoSang, 2006). A prominent example of such ground work is the Rainbow Coalition that was noted in Chapter 1. Yet, while the Rainbow Coalition is often recognized as an important example of multiracial-multiethnic organizing, few scholars have researched present cases of the sociopolitical influence on youth who organize across racial and ethnic identities. The studies that have highlighted multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing use terms such as "intercultural competence" or "intergroup relationships" in relation to how young people collaborate across difference (Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). In studying the intergroup dynamic among Black and Latinx youth organizers, Watkins et al. (2007) bridged social psychologist Gordon Allport's famous "intergroup contact hypothesis" to their analysis. According to Allport, in the

1950s, many people in U.S. society were influenced to believe that different racial groups could not build relationships with one another due to prejudice and, in particular, the violence of whites towards people of color. In an effort to dispel this, Allport set out to gain a greater understanding of intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). In his research, Allport adopted a "positive factors" approach wherein prejudice would be reduced if these four positive features held: "(a) equal status between the groups, (b) common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation, and (d) the support of authorities, law, or custom" (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008, p. 264). Watkins et al. (2007) took up this intergroup contact theory in their qualitative research of Black and Latinx youth collaborating in a youth activism program. They sought to understand how the youth were influenced by being in community with different racially identified youth. Watkins et al. found three stages of change by youth being in a diverse space which resulted in developing relationships across groups, learning and discovery of one another, and building a greater awareness of others that informed the youth's actions. They adopted the term "bridging difference" to label "…an active developmental process in which youth change their attitudes, acquire intercultural and intergroup competencies, form relationships, and alter their behavior—including, for some youth, developing commitments to counteract processes of discrimination and racism" (Watkins et al., 2007, p.381).

Importantly, Watkins et al. (2007) noted that there is much research on the intergroup dynamics between white and Black youth, more generally, and much less on the dynamics between different minoritized groups. This is where my study is situated and, as data will later highlight, expands how these intergroup dynamics are also highly contextualized by geographic location. Connectedly, Carey, Akiva, Abelatif, & Daughtry's (2020) multi-site case study of Black, white, Native American, and Asian Pacific Islander youth activists in Pittsburgh, further

spoke to the self-awareness that is garnered when minoritized youth organize with one another. They stated, "as youth gained greater self-awareness, they did so in community with others reflecting marginalized identities, and several youth noted the importance of language in their learning" (Carey et al., 2020, p. 9). By being a part of one another's political education and informing each other of their particular community's history and struggles, youth were able to grow their critical consciousness. Kolano & Davila (2018) found similar influences of critical consciousness in their study of activist identities of 5 Southeast Asian refugee youth in a grassroots community organization. The Southeast Asian youth were different in their ethnic identities and by being a part of their community organization they not only learned more about themselves, but also gained "…(1) pride in their ethnoracial cultural heritages, (2) self-empowerment through knowledge-building activities, and (3) awareness of shared struggles with other marginalized groups" (Kolano & Davila, 2018, p. 131). Here, awareness of shared struggles is of upmost importance because it is consistent with tenets of previous and current multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing. By being able to compose a shared struggle with one another via their critical consciousness development and work together, youth organizers find greater purpose in their work and ground their organizing in a collective approach for marginalized people (Carey et al., 2020; Kolano & Davila, 2018; Pulido, 2006).

The collective work of youth of color disassociates the idea that in order to have success you must go at it in isolation (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001). Kirshner (2009) argued, "the task of organizing other young people to join a social movement was at odds with an American discourse of individualism that assumes an atomistic relationship between the individual and society" (p. 433). Multiracial-multiethnic coalition building and collective action becomes the antithesis to individualism which leads youth into future work of aligning with communities to

effect change. This alignment is rooted in the belief that to transform unjust conditions you must build power and engage diverse collectives (Bystydzienski & Schacht, 2001; Pulido, 2006).

Notably, this engagement in diverse collectives is not as seamless or easy as one can read. Noted earlier, the divide and conquer tactics of state forces and actors who work to maintain the white supremacist capitalistic order, also infiltrates the mindsets of all, whether justice-oriented or not (Kaba, 2021). As prison-industrial complex abolitionist Mariame Kaba (2021) articulates, "…when we set about trying to transform society, we must remember that we ourselves will also need to transform" (p. 4). She goes further to state, "white supremacy, misogyny, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia exist everywhere" (Kaba, p. 4) and as beings within this world order, we are inevitably impacted and likely to reproduce the same harms without noted attention of the continual work of transformation and decolonizing our minds.

This need to continually work on the ways coalitions may also reproduce harm with one another is relevant when thinking about the reproduction of anti-Blackness in spaces of justice and multiracial-multiethnic coalitions (Abad, 2021; Liu & Shange, 2018). Dumas & ross (2016) posit that "antiblackness refers to a broader antagonistic relationship between blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" and "…is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life" (p. 429). Abad (2021) in his ethnographic study of Black and Asian youth cross-racial coalition in San Francisco, uncovers the ways anti-Blackness was discussed within this space. He spoke of the necessary work of dispelling the model minority myth among Asian populations and argued that, "centering antiblackness unsettles facile theorizations of solidarity and foregrounds the ways the state can deploy technologies – such as the model minority discourse – as part of an anti-Black settler

colonial project" (p. 308). This is to say that within community-based organizations that forge alliances across racial-ethnic divides, often confront the prevalence of anti-Blackness among minoritized communities (Abad, 2021; Liu & Shange, 2018). Thus, while not discounting the necessity and power of multiracial-multiethnic coalitions, Liu & Shange (2018) assert a *thick solidarity* that is "a kind of solidarity that mobilizes empathy in ways that do not gloss over difference, but rather pushes into the specificity, irreducibility, and incommensurability of racialized experiences" (p. 190). In this thick solidarity, multiracial-multiethnic coalitions can layer "…interpersonal empathy with historical analysis, political acumen, and a willingness to be led by those most directly impacted" and "…can withstand the tension of critique, the pulling back and forth between that which we owe and that which we share" (Liu & Shange, 2018, p. 196).

It is in the building of thick solidarity, while not perfected nor complete, that youth of this study attempted to engage. Below, I uplift the necessary elements of youths' resistance and critical consciousness that serves as the grounding of the organizing of youth of color and the conduit for their developmental understanding of "shared struggles."

Youths' Resistance and Critical Consciousness

Scholars have found that political education and youth development grounds youth organizers knowledge and organizing tactics. Political education typically comprises critical thinking, leadership development, analysis of systems and institutions, developing critical civic engagement, learning the history of past social justice movements and relevant strategies, and the history of organizing more largely (Kwon, 2013; Lewis-Charp et al., 2006). The political education of youth fuels their critical consciousness and that consciousness becomes the lens through which youth analyze the issues they select and their strategies for creating actions (Fine,

Torre, Burns, & Payne, 2006). One way to visualize how youth activists enact their political education is by reflecting on the work of SNCC. In 1960, Black college student activists came together for a conference in Raleigh, North Carolina with adult organizer Ella Baker, to decide how to further their work of desegregation beyond sit-ins (Hogan, 2019). Over three days, these leaders shared experiences, debated tactics, and together dreamed of what they ultimately wanted to achieve. As a result of this conference and training, the youth activists created what we now know as the trailblazing Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Their training with one another allowed them to generate a collective critical consciousness that allowed them to effectively advocate together and for one another.

Scholars have also analyzed the interplay of sociopolitical development, critical consciousness, and organizing among youth activists of color (Anyiwo, Bañales, Rowley, Watkins, & Richards-Schuster, 2018; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Watts & Hipolito-Delgado (2015) argue for linkages between sociopolitical action and critical action and forefront the strategic behavior of activists. In their argument they propose for the conceptualization of three levels of behavioral action: "…personal action, group action, and the mass action of social movements" (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 848). Further, they situate that sociopolitical action requires action within the three levels proposed and "…must also reflect an explicit critical analysis of the targeted problem and its structural features" (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 848). Anyiwo et al. (2018) utilize the development of African American youth as a case study to understand how "…sociocultural factors can contribute to youth's awareness of structures of social inequality…and engagement in action against social inequality…" (p. 166). They argue for a link between the salience of race and sociopolitical development and argue that "…the interplay among sociocultural factors…shapes African American youth's ability to

analyze inequality…and engage in social justice behaviors" (Anyiwo et al., 2018, p. 166). Together, these articles bridge the links between critical consciousness, sociopolitical development, and activism to nuance our understandings of the processes and contexts through which youth organizers engage to push for social change.

While the work of critical consciousness has often been taken up without the active component (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015), consciousness is still a critical element in the change work that youth organizers are enmeshed. Vizenor (2014) argued that consciousness is first individualized. He posited that, "consciousness is formed and changed by resistance and in incredibly diverse ways. The consciousness of resistance must be individual to have any meaning or significance. It must have individual meaning to appreciate a sense of presence" (p. 116). While maintaining individual consciousness is the foundation, in youth organizing the individual does not stop there, they must then work towards building a collective consciousness in order for organizing to become a community effort. As Ayala (2014) situated, "the change-work itself of a collaborative, the participatory process, is one, perhaps the first, transformative work" (p. 127). It is this change work that facilitates the development of youth activists and their political resistance.

Cultivating Youth Resistance

Ginwright (2006) in his study of Black youth activism and resistance, found that most scholars used resistance negatively in that it was oppositional and was conceptualized as "…a set of shared values, beliefs and attitudes that reject dominant social norms and contribute to behaviors that make it difficult to achieve" (para. 14). He argued that resistance could be a useful strategy for change and therefore put forth a transformative resistance which he defined as the ways Black youth "challenge negative stereotypes and engage in local political struggles over

quality of life issues" (Ginwright, 2006, para. 14). Resistance is not a new phenomenon, rather it was the foundation of all the aforementioned movements of young people of color throughout this chapter. In the words of Black feminist Dillard (2000), "to give voice to silenced spaces is an act of resistance" (p. 673). Thus, resistance is also the counterstories that marginalized communities of color share and the truth to their lived realities. In this dissertation, youth resistance represents both the action to eradicate injustices they face and it encompasses the voice they use to speak out against such oppression.

Youth Development

Delgado & Staples (2013) in their review of youth-led organizing, found that the youth development field evolved in the mid-1990s to include the strengths of young people as well, and to help youth develop "…their potential for cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual growth" (p. 6). Continuing the history of youth development, they stipulated that "positive youth development" became a strategy in the early 2000s to center the strengths of young people and its continual growth via programming and activities (Delgado & Staples, 2013). Finally, Delgado & Staples (2013) linked in community youth development that arose in the mid-2000s to address how marginalized youth could not be separated from their environments and therefore needed a multi-pronged approach that included their communities.

Additionally, youth development has been analyzed from a multitude of angles including sociopolitical development, adolescent development, and ethnic-racial identity formation (Diemer et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2017; Seaton, Yip, & Sellers 2009). Sociopolitical development represents the self-efficacy and belief that one can reduce inequities and structural oppression (Diemer et al., 2009; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Adolescent development is focused on the negotiations and formation of identity (Seaton et al., 1990). Ethnic-racial identity

(ERI) formation amongst youth has been recognized as an important developmental stage because it "…encompasses the beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about their ethnic-racial group and the processes by which these develop over time" (Rivas-Drake et al., 2017, p. 711). Rivas-Drake et al. (2017) articulate that these processes include the ability to "resolve the meaning of their ethnicity" (p. 711). All of these perspectives of youth development are important for my dissertation as youth are navigating all of these, while being an organizer within their communities.

The contexts in which youth are developing is also important as Butler-Barnes et al. (2013) argued that adolescents' development is influenced by ecological systems at the micro, meso, and macro level. Specifically, for minoritized youth, the scholars stated, "…their definition of self and contributions to society are largely based on being a person of color and coping with experiences that are unique to being a person of color" (Butler-Barnes et al., 2013, p. 1445). These larger influences of society (i.e., systemic racism) and their social positioning as youth of color, can facilitate the ways in which they elect to learn more about themselves and critically analyze society writ large (Kirshner, 2015).

Youth's Collective Assessment of Oppressive Environments and Critical Consciousness

To uplift urban youth's assets and strengths**,** Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota (2008) drew from critical race theory, youth participatory action research with Black and Latinx youth, and critical media literacy to generate the theory of "youthtopias." Youthtopias was created to "present a theoretical framework for developing pedagogic spaces of resistance and resiliency" (p. 2). In their theoretical framework, the scholars jointly analyzed their different empirical projects with youth activists and found across their research sites that youth were discussing how different oppressions were affecting them. The authors define youthtopias as "…traditional and

non-traditional educational spaces where young people depend on one another's skills, perspectives, and experiential knowledge, to generate original, multi-textual, youth-driven cultural products that embody a critique of oppression, a desire for social justice…" (Akom et al., 2008, p. 3). An exemplification of the work of "youthtopias," as described by a youth voice, was offered when a young girl stated,

> [T]o me a youthtopia is a place where students are both leaders and followers where students can both talk and be talked to-- places were students are respected and come up with ideas and plans to make a difference in our communities, kinda like the Black Panthers (Akom et al., 2008, p.16).

Akom et al. (2008) established this as "youthtopias" where community members of all ages, but specifically the youth, were able to generate leadership that was specific to them. The development of this leadership is also part and parcel of youth advancing a critical consciousness. This development is relevant to community-based educational spaces because young people are generating this consciousness with one another by engaging in political education with each other in the space.

Critical consciousness has been examined since the revolutionary movements in the U.S. and globally (Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010). While there are many variations of the definition of critical consciousness they all have a similar foundational understanding such that it is the critical assessment and understandings which "…involves preparing young people to confront pressing community problems and shift from individual blame to a consciousness of root and systemic causes of personal problems. This consciousness strengthens individual and collective agency…" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 82). Ginwright (2010) argues that critical consciousness is necessary for young people to develop a mindset of social change. It is also

important to note the collective agency component for youth because they are not operating alone. The consciousness they are cultivating is within a community atmosphere.

The community atmosphere in which youth organizers work helps generate youth's social capital. As articulated by Yosso (2005), "*social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79). As youth form a collective agency they are also garnering social capital as they further develop their critical consciousness amongst one another and by learning with one another. Ginwright (2007) extended social capital with a "critical social capital" that Black youth—and I extend that to youth of color—establish from community spaces. Ginwright (2007) puts forth that this capital is exemplified by "…small community-based organizations in Black communities that foster political consciousness and prepare Black youth to address issues in their communities" (p. 404). He explained these CBOs also included adult allies who fostered "mutual trust and reciprocity" with Black youth activists. This fostering allowed for critical social capital to be sustained in that adult allies collaborated with youth to present "…opportunities where Black youth were viewed as legitimate political actors" (Ginwright, 2007, p. 411). He further stipulated that critical social capital "…involves creating a collective racial and cultural identity among Black youth that provides them with a unified understanding of their plight in American society" (Ginwright, 2007, p. 411). Together, social capital and critical social capital, with the support of adult allies, allows for young people of color to learn more of each other's struggles and utilize this learning to advance social justice in the ways they need.

So far, throughout this chapter I have outlined the foundations of community organizing, youth organizing within community organizing, the legacies of past youth of color movements

that provided the rich ground for youth activists today, and the developmental aspects youth garner when they are engaged in such social justice work. Next, I weave together my conceptual framework that helps guide my inquiry into the youths' organizing tactics, their coalition building, and their efforts to construct their organizer identities, critical consciousness, and resistance within an intergenerational multiracial-multiethnic CBO.

Part II - Conceptual Framework: Bridging a Social Justice Youth Development Framework, Youth Resistance, and a Relational Race Framing

Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) developed a social justice youth development (SJYD) framework to extend youth development literature to include urban youth involved in social justice work. Ginwright & James (2002) argued that SJYD "…examines how urban youth contest, challenge, respond to, and negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives" (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 36). In promoting SJYD as a framework to better understand and locate the work and lives of urban youth, Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) offer principles and strategies of SJYD which includes the analysis of power in social relationships, makes identity central, promotes systemic change, encourages collective action, and embraces youth culture. These principles are well suited for my dissertation study as my research questions are rooted in learning about youth's development of their organizer identities, their organizing and coalition building, their navigation of ethnic-racial intersections and tensions, and determining if their multiracial-multiethnic coalition has any influence on the meaning making of their resistance and critical consciousness. SJYD situates urban youth at the center to examine the ways in which youth combat injustices to transform their communities, much like the youth organizers I studied. Moreover, the framework explores how youth contend with the issues they are fighting against, such as educational inequity, by foregrounding education scholar Paulo Freire's concept

of "praxis," which couples critical consciousness and social action. Through praxis, Ginwright & Cammarota argue that youth are able to use their principles as lenses through which they build their activism. Similarly, the youth organizers of the CBO engage in trainings and political education – taught by one another and adult allies – where they utilize nationally regarded youth organizer training modules or create workshops that they share amongst one another and teach to the broader community of Detroit.

Importantly, Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) posit a needed ecological understanding for the work of youth activists. They argue that while a prosocial youth development perspective is important, it is not enough and, instead, what is needed is a greater contextual and critical understanding of the work of youth organizers. Prosocial youth development is rooted in altruism where youth learn and enact behaviors that add to the betterment of society such as unselfishly helping another person or service learning like community clean ups. Prosocial behavior is important but does not holistically encapsulate the development of youth. SJYD includes an ecological approach "…to provide a brief overview of the political, economic, and cultural context in which youth development and political participation occur" (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 28). Specifically, this approach is used to highlight the highly contentious spaces that youth of color are living within, and thus organizing within. In doing so, the framework provides a more nuanced understanding of political engagement and youth development. Particularly, Ginwright & Cammarota (2007) center the Black and Latinx youth organizers they collaborated with in Oakland, CA to speak to the critical work that these youth engage, as opposed to the often harmful stereotypes depicted (i.e., apathetic and/or violent Black and Brown youth). As urban youth are often within communities that have been historically over-policed, materially neglected, and segregated (Ewing, 2018; Howard, 2008; Irving, 1999; Wilson, 2015), many

critical scholars argue that youth must also foster a praxis that influences their belief that change is possible by their hands (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Ginwright & James, 2002).

To further assist the activism of young people, Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) position SJYD as an effective approach for working with them as it "…accounts for the multiple forms of oppression youth encounter and highlights the strategies they use to address inequities plaguing their communities" (p. 83). Moreover, and integral to my study, they argue that to promote praxis amongst youth, youth workers need to engage them in three ways: self-awareness that centers self-evaluation and exploration, social awareness that teaches youth to think critically about the issues in their communities, and a global awareness that pushes for youth to be critically reflective to be able to "…empathize with the struggles of oppressed people throughout the world" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 90). Altogether, youths' praxis is exemplified by the principles and these three ways of engagement. With this framework, in my later chapters I will magnify the ways Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth individually and collectively define, negotiate, and struggle to harness a self, social, and global awareness.

While Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) developed a necessary framework for understanding and analyzing youth's organizing, it was rooted in how *adults* could engage youth and not how youth may already be engaged in activism, or in how they may learn from one another. For an example, when describing SJYD the scholars speak to how it can be used as an adult practice to "encourage" youth to address larger issues in their communities or that it could be used as a way to "promote" praxis amongst youth. This framing does not incorporate the ways in which youth may engage or learn from one another, or how youth may organize on their own volition without the engagement of an adult or youth worker. In my study, while adults do engage youth, the youth are also learning from one another and, on their own volition, are

joining the collective because of their and their families experiences within Detroit's political and educational landscape. Because of this, I found that specific consideration of youth resistance is important to embed in my conceptual framework alongside the important lens of SJYD.

Youth Resistance Theory

In the context of this dissertation, I define resistance as the ways in which youth of color are informed by a critical consciousness to create avenues to alter their oppressive and repressive educational realities. Additionally, Fine et al.'s (2014) understanding and positioning of resistance theory given her experience researching and working with youth is important for my context. She explained resistance theory reflects "an epistemology, a line of vision, theorizing and analysis," and she added that it, "does not require intent and it does not guarantee victory, it simply presumes the human yearning for dignity and action. Acts of resistance…reflect our human capacity to demand what should be, especially when transformation in the moment seems so improbable" (p. 50). Moreover, Fine et al. (2014) argued that resistance in the work of young people assumes "…conviction and intentionality, not passivity and conformity" (p. 48). This description and utility of resistance theory is part and parcel of the larger picture of how the youth organize, why the organize, and whom they choose to organize with. Here, I argue that SJYD is enhanced by this resistance theory because it emphasizes how youth are agents in their own revolutionary changes and are not empty vessels coming to this work (Freire, 1970). Instead, youth often enact their agency by joining an organizing group such as the YOC and collaborate with one another to be more influential in their advocacy.

Finally, Fine et al. (2014) asserted that resistance is not to be romanticized or positioned in a binary of one being resistant or not. Instead, she argued that youth, similar to other folks, are

immersed in the contradictions and are learning and growing while also being leaders in their communities. She further stipulates, "resistance is never pure, never simply oppositional or rejecting; it is often enacted with an affective bouillabaisse of anger, disappointment, sense of injustice, desire, yearning and ambivalence" (Fine et al., 2014, p. 50). In this necessary paradoxical nature of the both/and, youth are agentic and elect to be a part of organizing while being a child in their families, a student in their schools, a friend to their peers, and a member in their communities. In this complexity, and amongst this nuance, is where my dissertation is predicated.

Adding a Relational Race Frame

In addition to SJYD and a youth resistance theory, I integrate a relational race frame as the final component to my conceptual framework. My focus on the intersections and tensions of youth's multiracial-multiethnic coalition building requires addressing how race is understood and engaged relationally among people of color (Molina et al., 2019). Critical historians Molina et al. (2019) posit such a framework. They argued that "…racialized meanings, identities, and characteristics are always constituted through relationships and are always dependent on a shared field of social meaning; they are never produced in isolation. Race is not legible or significant outside a relational context" (p. 6). In order to grasp how race is being learned and understood relationally, the scholars stipulate that "…examining the relationships and articulations between and among subordinated groups requires scholars 'to break with this notion of a one-at-a-time relationship with whiteness for each aggrieved group'" (Molina et al., 2019, p. 6). Therefore, by engaging with race in connection to other racialized groups offers a more nuanced understanding of experiences, and also the interconnectedness of how different oppressive forces and policies affect communities of color. By incorporating a more inclusive framework of race, it pushes

against the status quo of centering whiteness, and instead seeks to learn more about the ways "…'polylateral relations among aggrieved communities of color develop and cohere" (Molina et al., 2019, p. 7). This relational conceptualization is integral to my ethnographic study as the youth collective I researched encompasses the three major racial-ethnic identities and the most marginalized voices in Detroit. In their childhoods, these youth choose to organize, center, and celebrate their diverse identities, and also critically engage one another around their shared issues of educational inequality within their city (see Figure 2-1). As they coalesce around this desired change, this dissertation highlights how they learn and grow with one another can be the future of more impactful organizing and activism.

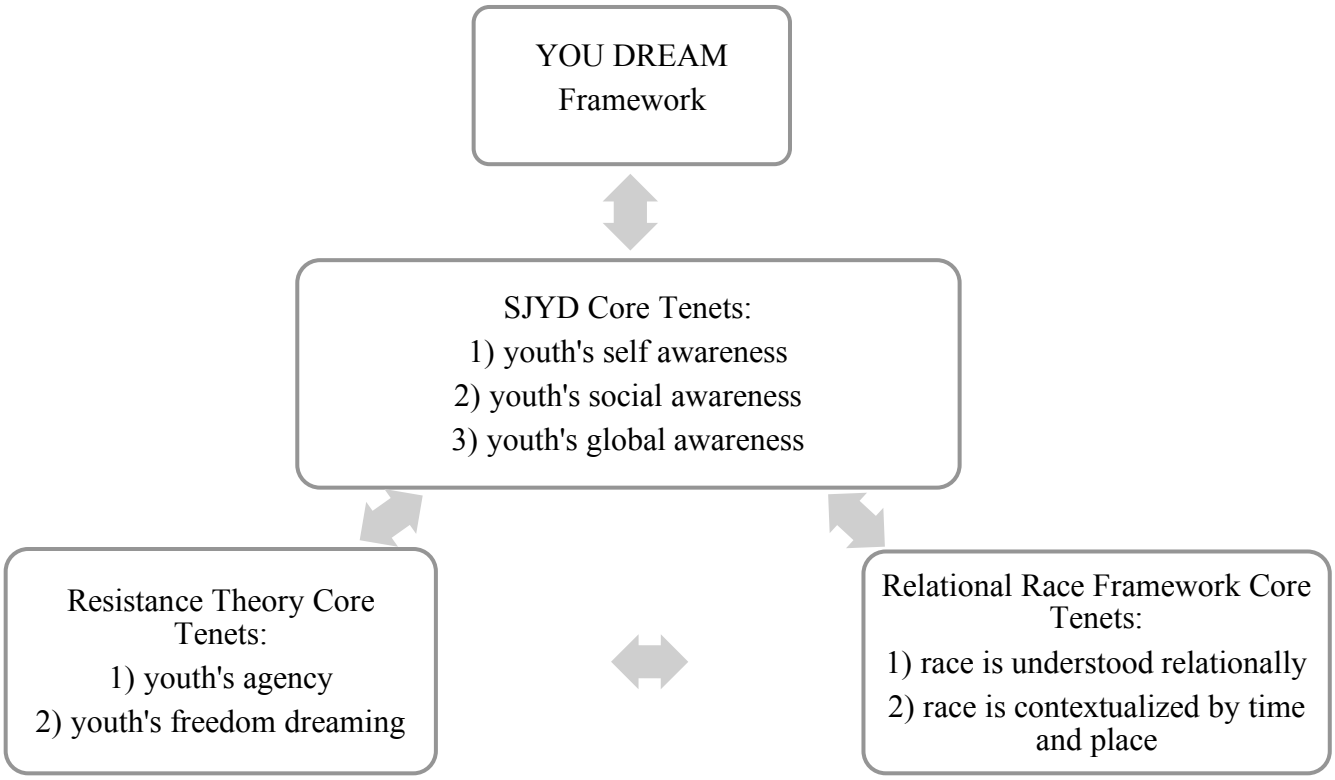

Figure 2-1: This figure illustrates the components of my conceptual framework for this study. The social justice youth development (SJYD) framework is the larger lens that is complemented by resistance theory and a relational race framework.

Altogether, SJYD is an important frame to my study as it includes the merging of critical consciousness and social action that youth undergo to change their communities. SJYD is

complemented by the agency that youth hold via resistance theory and is further enhanced theoretically by a relational race frame due to my focus on how youth of color organize in a multiracial-multiethnic CBO. Consequently, this dissertation is naturally multi-pronged to encompass the nuances of marginalized youth within a highly contested urban education system who choose to organize against such inequities. Therefore, including all three of these strands is integral to my analysis. Next, I will describe how this dissertation is embodied through a critical qualitative study.

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methods

My critical qualitative study derives from my experience and history with a community-based organization's youth organizing collective (YOC). This study is also a part of my own epistemologies that are always critical of the ways in which educational inequities are ever-present in urban schooling systems such as Detroit. Moreover, I am deeply vested in the youth organizers who advocate for their school's equitable education. My collaboration with the YOC guides my study's research questions, and greater methodological decisions. This study is also undergirded by my understanding that systemic racism and white supremacy are endemic to society and that they maintain inequity and injustice within the U.S. educational system. Hence, the work I am interested in is about how youth of color collaborate with their peers and communities to expose these systems, and this study is inextricably linked to how those who are in the struggle of fighting such injustices are some of our best teachers.

I position the youth organizers as the experts in this study. As a Black woman researcher, activist, and community organizer, I include my subjectivity in this work too. While I recognize that objectivity is not realistic, I was actively reflexive in how I am a part of the work personally, politically, and socially (Carrillo, 2014). Although I understand this, I also grapple with the nuance of my subjectivity and aim to be just in my assessment so that I am not presenting data that serves my own interests. As Madison (2012) argued, one must "…attend to how our *subjectivity in relation to* others informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of others" (p. 10). Even in this messiness, it is no less important to state my subjectivity, positionality, and how the interconnectedness of my various stances inform and guide this

dissertation (Stovall, 2014) with youth organizers. I explicate and highlight the youth's voices and dreams and expose the unjust educational environments that make their activism necessary. It is with this desire for justice, and joy of collaborating with youth organizers of color, that this dissertation study unfolds.

Researcher Positionality

As a community organizer, I come to this work as a scholar who is centered in building relationships with community in research and in action. While I do not employ a participatory action research method, I was a part of building with the youth because of my roles as an adult ally and researcher. In my ten years as an organizer, I have learned the strategies and tactics of working towards justice in community and across coalitions. As a college student at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), I was the co-chair of our Black Student Union where I co-led university wide protests and collaborated across the state to advocate for more diversity within the UC system. Later in my tenure at UCB, I was nominated by our multicultural coalition, CALSERVE, to run for political office on behalf of the major multicultural organizations at Berkeley that included African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and the Raza and Chicana(o) community. After my nomination, I became one of the leaders of the coalition, along with my comrades, in various justice issues on campus such as race relations and for the reinstatement of Affirmative Action. It was with these experiences that I learned the necessity of power building and coalition building to have a chance at effecting system-wide change.

Within this dissertation, I have seen similar cross-cultural coalition building strategies and tactics used within the YOC. At the start of my work with Detroit Vitality, I was not as aware of their coalition structure because the CBO was still building, and I was focused on Black

youth activism. While my roots will always remain in Black activism and history, I found over the summer of 2019 that focusing only on Black youth organizers in the collective no longer suited the aspects of the work within the YOC. For instance, I had been a part of multiple protests with the youth that revealed their coalition efforts. The Arab American youth in the YOC, and more specifically the Yemeni Muslim youth, spoke out against their charter school administrators in protest of their unequal education. Given their public speak out at a graduation ceremony, the administrators withheld the senior class transcripts. For greater people power, the Arab American youth asked if I would support them by going to the district office to demand the release of their transcripts. During this action, I learned from the Yemeni youth about the different ethnic divisions within the Arabic community. Later that summer, I was a part of the immigration rally mentioned in my Chapter 1 where as a collective we marched for undocumented peoples' rights. And finally, in September 2019, during the co-chair elections of the youth collective and listening to their speeches, I learned how the diversity of their youth coalition influenced their development as organizers. In their speeches, youth spoke about their experiences in the multiracial-multiethnic YOC and how they learned about the power of collective advocacy with other youth of color.

All these experiences and conversations with the youth, highlighted how much they were employing traditional organizing tactics of building a cross-cultural base. While organizing in multiracial-multiethnic coalitions is not new (i.e., the Rainbow Coalition), I argue that cross-cultural organizing is even more important in society today with the rapid demographic changes and the many cross-cutting social justice issues with education, the school to prison nexus, juvenile rights, racial uprisings, and environmental issues. Moreover, these deeply rooted, systemic issues cannot be altered by one single group, organization, or state. Social change will

require intersectional movement building and collaboration. These understandings have brought together my expertise and experiences as a community organizer, teacher, and advocate in education. In collaboration with the youth collective, I honor their work and showcase it as the leading example through which educational stakeholders can learn. I speak to not only this, but also to the centering of place and identity as important lenses through which young people organize.

Research Design

Given my immersion and dedication to be a reciprocal contributing member of the YOC, I determined that a critical qualitative approach, using critical ethnographic methods, was best suited for my dissertation study. Denzin (2017) states, "critical qualitative inquiry scholars are united in the commitment to expose and critique the forms of inequality and discrimination that operate in daily life" (p. 9). Moreover, Denzin argues that there has been a shift in the qualitative field in that critical qualitive research has at its core "…the avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual. From this principle flow the liberal and radical politics of action…" (p. 10). In the realm of ethnography Madison (2005) positioned, "critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" (p. 5). Thus, a combination of a critical qualitative approach and critical ethnographic methods was most useful to highlight how youth organizers were navigating their lived educational, political, and social contexts (Denzin, 2017; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Madison, 2005). Additionally, Madison stated, "the critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control" (p. 5). Highlighting youth

activists' voice and lived experience in their activism with their peers, represents my disruption of the status quo and the stereotype of apathetic youth in urban cities (Akom et al., 2008). Employing critical ethnographic methods allowed for the centering of youth voice, in their lived environments, and situated the youth in their educational advocacy with one another. It is this positioning of youth first and as asserting their truths that drove this work.

Methodological Objectives and Values

Methodologies are not only necessary to push against hegemony and what is considered "scientific knowledge," but they can also work to be transformative. Related to research with Black communities, O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller (2007) argued, "when studies fail to account analytically for black heterogeneity, we construct oversimplified notions of what it means to be Black and thereby compromise our ability to make sense of the substantive variation…" (p. 545). Connectedly, methodologies must emphasize and require the analysis of positionality, reflexivity, and essentialism. Youth resistance methodologies that center youths' stances, critiques, and assessments are also aligned with these analyses and further argue that researchers who work with youth must uphold "youth power and agency, protecting rights and averting harm, and developing trust and respecting youth" (Guishard & Tuck, 2014, p. 188). These contentions derived from race-based and youth resistance methodologies which pushed for centering community voice and honoring the moral obligation of uplifting the power and agency of communities (Guishard & Tuck, 2014; Madison, 2005). Altogether, as I collaborated with the youth organizers of this study, I centered these methodological foundations of heterogeneity and reflexivity. Given my use of critical ethnographic methods as the research strategy for my critical qualitative study, I delve into a brief over view of ethnography and how it was situated within my study.

Ethnography's Roots

Ethnography began in anthropology for researchers to study culture and be immersed within particular cultural settings. Hesse-Biber (2016) identified ethnographers as

> …researchers who go inside the social worlds of the inhabitants of their research setting, hanging out, observing, and recording the ongoing social life of its members by providing thick descriptions of the social context and the everyday activities of the people who live in these worlds, spending a good amount of time engaging with the events, people, and activities in the setting. (p. 533)

This immersion is an integral aspect of ethnography as it seeks to learn about a lived reality of people who inhabit it. As a methodology, ethnography utilizes observations as a key method (Hesse-Biber, 2016). After "complete participant" where participants do not know the identity of the researcher and they are "undercover", participant observations are the second highest level of engagement within a setting and requires that a researcher spends an extended amount of time in the environment where their identity is known (Hesse-Biber, 2016). In YOU DREAM, while interviews were my key method, I supplemented my research with the use of participant observations where I participated in the activities of the YOC and the collective knew my identity as a doctoral student and researcher at the University of Michigan. Ethnographers record their observations with field notes while in the site or immediately after they leave it. As a participant observer, I took field notes while in the different in-person and virtual settings of the YOC (described in more detail later in the chapter). I utilized memos and audio recordings of myself, so I could further provide thick descriptions of the YOC. While virtual, I did not record the YOC meetings because the precariousness of being in COVID-19 and not all youth in the collective consented to be a part of my project. The thick descriptions from my in-person notes

encompassed my memory of the setting and in vivo (infer meaning) words or phrases of the youth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Like all research and methodologies, ethnography has not been without fault, issue, or critique. The beginning uses of ethnography (and some still present day) garnered criticism as it was often conducted by white researchers who wanted to "go native" and expose the cultural differences of the "Other." In articulating the move from "outsider" to "insider" as an act of colonization, Ladson-Billings (2000) cites Villenas' (1966) critique of how ethnographers assumed all knowledge over communities. Villenas (1966) argued, "by objectifying the subjectivities of the researched, by assuming authority, by not questioning their own privileged positions, ethnographers have participated as colonizers of the researched" (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 267). Yet, despite some of these controversial histories, ethnography has been adopted and adapted overtime to be more critical and to include a more dialogic relationship with research participants.

YOU DREAM's Critical Qualitative Study with Ethnographic Methods

From a critical positioning Denzin (2017) asserts critical qualitative studies "…seek morally informed disciplines and interventions…" (p. 9) and have the following goals:

> it places the voices of the oppressed at the center; it uses inquiry to reveal sites for change and activism; it uses inquiry and activism to help people; it affects social policy by getting critiques heard and acted on by policy makers; it affects changes in the inquirer's life, thereby serving as a model of change for others… (p. 9)

Therefore, critical qualitative inquiry is obligated to promoting justice in all spheres of research and utilize methods that helps to achieve activist aims. Similarly, as my core method of research, critical ethnography is concerned with how to transform the sites in collaboration with their

participants (Madison, 2005). In this collaborative commitment, ethnography can situate the researcher and collaborator together in being "co-conspirators" (Love, 2019) for disrupting power and injustices (Madison, 2005). With this approach, the researcher is still seeking to create "an in-depth picture of a cultural setting…" (Hesse-Biber, 2016, p. 539) but they are doing so with the people in the site. Herein lies the complexity of being an "insider" and "outsider." These activist stance collaborations still require researchers and participants to hold that there are different positionings and power-laden decisions that rests on both sides of the involvement. The process of site selection, access, participants, field note descriptions, interview questions, focus group dynamics, and the eventual exiting of the researcher are all part of this complexity which require discussion and transparency from the beginning of the research (Kouritizin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Luttrell, 2000). While these complexities do not just solely rest within ethnography, they still are important to highlight as my dissertation encompassed these needed approaches. Yet, one key difference in my study is that I did not exit my research space and plan to keep close ties with my research participants as that is a part of my epistemological dedication to staying connected with those who I engage in organizing and activist research.

Critical ethnographic methods were primed for my study because of the ways in which I collaborated with the youth to explore their collaboration, learnings, and growth with one another. As Neal-Jackson (2018) posited in her dissertation about the experiences of Black girls in a charter school, "critical ethnography, as a method of discovery, explicitly utilizes tools of inquiry that unearth issues of power, injustice, and social reproduction within the lives of the marginalized and oppressed" (p. 31). Moreover, Anderson (1989) in his review of critical ethnography, underscored how "…critical ethnographers aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding" (p. 253). These two goals of critical ethnography highlight

the importance of not only being in community with the people of the project, but also that the method is explicit about the disruption of power and inequality. In my study and with my methodology, I actively sought to be a co-conspirator and a part of decolonizing academia. As I referenced to Villenas' (1966) work earlier, a part of the *how* of decolonizing methodology in critical ethnographic methods is one's interaction and kinship with communities. This is not a certification of an "insider status," but rather a constant reminder that while one can be immersed in a site, and have privileges as a researcher, the community is the expert of their experiences. I assert that *relationships* are a key part of decolonizing through methodological approaches, much like a critical ethnography. An essential part of these relationships is the harmony between shared values, personal life, and research. Harmony is represented by a critical analysis of one's privilege, positionality, relation to participants, and the eventual ending of a project. Yet, this does not mean a researcher cannot be in close community with their collaborators or continue a relationship beyond the given study. As Ladson-Billings (2000) so eloquently stated in her article about critical race theory as a disruptor to academia's colonization, "my research is a part of my life and my life is a part of my research" (p. 268). Akin to Ladson-Billings, my research is a part of my life. I am most proud of this project because of its roots and collaboration within communities of color. After my graduate student researcher position with Detroit Vitality, they asked me if the YOC could be the site for my dissertation. More than this, we have truly built close relationships outside of organizing. We all celebrate with one another, I have met families, I am close to some of the parents of the youth, and I have been affectionately nicknamed by some of the women of color elders as "the doctor." Taken together, my unapologetic dedication to the YOC and the youth's explicitness about unearthing and advocating against abuses of power, necessitated critical ethnographic methods.

My dissertation is comprised of the following four restated research questions:

1) How do youth of color who participate in an urban multiracial-multiethnic community-based organization, come to understand and describe their organizer identities?
2) How does being in a multiracial-multiethnic community-based organization inform and advance youth of color's coalition building?
3) How do youth organizers understand and navigate points of ethnic-racial intersections and tensions?
4) How does the coalition building structure of an organizations' youth organizing collective influence how youth of color make meaning of their resistance, critical consciousness, and activism?

These questions center the experiences and expertise of the youth organizers and how they operate and navigate the educational complex in Detroit, their neighborhoods, and in their collective to effect educational change.

I used the methods of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations which I further detail in my data collection section. As a part of my immersion in Detroit Vitality from 2019-2020, I joined a group of eight other adult allies to support the work of the youth collective. During data collection, the CBO employed three adult allies in the YOC and the other five allies received mini grants to support their participation as educators and members of partner activist organizations. As a request from Detroit Vitality, I joined this group of adults to support the youth and attended their monthly adult ally meetings pre-COVID-19. After COVID-19, we continued to meet and increased to weekly meetings so that we could address the pressing pandemic needs such as advocating for schools to create more access for low-income families in Detroit and joining the larger Black Lives Matter movement to defund the DPSCD police

department. Altogether, I participated and collected data in the pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 era YOC meetings, rallies, network wide meetings (including parents), interviews, and focus groups led by my research.

The Backdrop to Detroit's Educational Complex and Detroit Communities

In 2017, the reinstated Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) school board, pushed for an audit of the school district state takeover to analyze the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) decisions and practices from 1999-2016. The school board-hired firm, Allen Law Group (ALG), and released a report in November 2019 and found that the students of the public school district have been enormously undereducated for decades because of mismanagement. The firm went as far to state that "…the community will likely feel the impact of these damages for generations to come, as these same students are required to enter a rapidly evolving global economy where an adequate K-12 education is a necessity" (ALG, 2019, p. 2). Some of these damages include the debt accruement of the district where by fiscal year 2011, under emergency managers, there was an operational deficit of $284 million and continues to grow (AFG, 2019; Telford, 2018). Additionally, through citing interviews with teachers and administrators and access to public documents of the district, the law group highlighted a host of stark inequities that lie at the heart of why the youth organizers dedicate so much time and energy to their activist efforts. Some necessary numbers to note are Detroit's rapid school closures since 2000 when 288 schools were open compared to 2015 when only 93 were open (ALG, 2019). Regarding teacher loss, in 2005 the district had over 8,000 teachers, by 2015 only 3000 teachers remained, and administrators went from 583 to 333 (ALG, 2019). These losses were further advocated against with the nationally known 2016 Detroit teacher sick-outs whereby teachers protested the horrid building conditions which forced 88 of the district's schools to close. In a

note by the firm they stated, "some more egregious violations included insects and rodents in buildings, signs of water damage in the ceilings, and mold/mildew found growing in at least two classrooms" (ALG, 2019, p. 5). The conditions of schools, lack of teachers, and extreme mismanagement of the schools, are a part of the youth's education organizing agenda.

Neoliberalism at its Height within Detroit

Some of the largest U.S. urban public school districts have been a focus for a lot of educational research. More specifically, urban school districts such as Chicago, New Orleans, and Detroit have been of particular interest due to the height of neoliberalist markets that have taken over districts with predominantly students of color (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Pedroni, 2011; Wilson, 2015). Lipman & Haines (2007) in their work on the neoliberalist educational market in Chicago defined neoliberalism as "…a set of policies that promote the primacy of the market, the fluidity of capital and labor, and individual self-interest in all spheres of economic and social life" (p. 476). For the place of Detroit, the work of Hetrick et al. (2020) is helpful as they situate that neoliberalism in Detroit is "…characterized by support for school system privatization which often—but not always—overlaps with school choice advocacy, and more specifically, the support and proliferation of for-profit charter schools" (p. 4). Detroit has become a hub for charter schools under the veil of "choice" that has left a lot of communities with really no choice at all. Due to these educational conditions in the city and young people's experiences within this inequitable educational terrain, youth organizers in the YOC have taken it upon themselves to fight against the continual assault on their education.

Some of the harsh realities discussed above are part and parcel of the neoliberal regime that has perpetuated this notion of 'choice' for families in the aftermath of closure, which is often

the equivalent of charter options with no regulation or oversight (Scott, 2011; Telford, 2018). Wealthy white benefactors and venture philanthropists who have taken an interest in for-profit schools are linked to these approaches in urban school districts (Scott, 2011). As Scott (2011) argued,

> Private institutions, foundations, and wealthy individuals are able to shape policy according to their sensibilities, without the need to engage in public deliberation about their inclinations. The connection between this assessment and the demographic trends in urban public schooling are important for understanding the racial politics of advocacy in public education more broadly and helps to explain why urban schools have been ripe for neoliberal reforms. (p. 584)

The interconnections between race, place, and urbanity should not be glossed over as it has been the premise for scholarly arguments about the core issue with neoliberalism. Its proliferation and tactics of school closures, influence of white wealthy philanthropists, and testing as the driver of choice, are often only within communities of color who have been deemed inadequate to be a part of their local school processes (Goldberg, 2009; Rodriguez, 2017; Scott, 2011). The disregard of community members' knowledge and experience is also a part of the Detroit urban school context. Connected with school closures, as Wilson, Bentley, & Kneff-Chang (2019) have found "…urban, low-income residents— predominantly Black and/or Latinx— have minimal opportunities to influence officials' decision making about school closure in their communities" (p. 5). Yet, while Detroit can be a difficult educational landscape to navigate, community members, and more specifically youth organizers, have found means to organize around such inequities and make their voices heard via protests and by involving their peers in listening campaigns where they learn which educational issues are the most pressing to their peers. Youth

are not only learning about the contexts in which they are organizing but are taking this knowledge to inform their activist tactics.

Detroit and its Black, Latinx, and Arab American Communities

While Detroit is one of the largest cities with the most concentrated amount of Black people, little is known about the ways in which the city has pockets of different racial and ethnic enclaves. Noted in the research about Detroit and its' populations there is a Black Detroit, Latinx Detroit, and Arab Detroit which all coalesce in the community-based organization with the youth organizers representing each community (Gonzales & Shields, 2014; Nasser, 2012; Wilson et al., 2019). This representation in the CBO is no easy feat given how the city has been parsed out and divided where certain segments of Detroit have majority ethnic-racial communities such as southwest Detroit having predominantly Latinx community members, and Dearborn (a suburb outside of Detroit) having at least one third of its population identifying as Arabic (Kieffer et al., 2004; Weaver, 2010). To date, Detroit is the third most segregated city in the U.S. (Janmohamed, 2019). The segregation of the city is also represented by its racial and ethnic enclaves (Denvir, 2012; Janmohamed, 2019; Martinez-Beltran, 2016). Detroit's segregation is not a new phenomenon amongst urban centers, and communities have continued to collaborate across their geospatial divides (HoSang, 2006). Historically, communities of color have come together for social justice and social change issues to build power and to have a greater chance at achieving justice (HoSang, 2006). Similarly, the youth of color who represent these different "Detroits" (i.e., Black Detroit, Latinx Detroit, and Arab Detroit) come together in the CBO to fight for educational equity and educational justice. In the four following paragraphs I briefly contextualize each Detroit to provide greater understanding of how these enclaves are both independent and intertwined as represented in Detroit Vitality.

Black Detroit. Detroit was a major port during the Great Migration from the South by millions of Black people from 1915-1970 (Omanson, 2013). At the height of the automotive industry and during WWII, companies recruited heavily from the African American community which led into the Black population quadrupling between 1940-1970 (Sugrue, 2005). Very quickly, Black communities began to develop an influential political base whereby 1944, "…the Detroit NAACP had over 25,000 members, the largest NAACP chapter in the nation, and it was becoming a serious force in local politics" (Mirel, 1993, p. 187). Significantly, in relation to Black education, in the 1960s Detroit's' Black communities became the first major city to put forth formal demands for community control (Pilo, 1975). The rich history of Blackness in Detroit also must be noted in terms of music and political activity such as the famous Motown Records and Black activism where Detroit "…was a significant site of political and religious activity and was gaining notice for the quality of life it could provide its Black residents" (Walters, 2019). Today, the Black population in Detroit has not significantly diminished with 77% of its residents identifying as Black/African American and is still one of the nation's largest majority Black city (ACS, 2018). The city has had a lot of notable Black organizations that began and thrived and was also the first city to call for local control of Detroit Public Schools (Moore & Johnston, 1971). Regarding its educational system, Detroit Public Schools Community District's (DPSCD) student population is 98% students of color and of those students 82% are African American/Black (CRDC, 2017; Michigan Department of Education, 2019). Detroit's policies have historical roots in being anti-Black (Aberbach & Walker, 1972, Moore & Johnston, 1971) such as promoting educational policies that have particularly set forth school closures in and furthered constricted access to policymakers (Bracey, 2015; Khalifa, Douglas, & Chambers,

2016; Wilson, 2015). Yet, even with all the policies and roots of politics being anti-Black, the city has also been home to major Black movements. As Khalifa et al. (2016) highlighted,

> Every major Black protest organization had roots in Detroit, and the Nation of Islam was birthed on Detroit's East Side. The black Panthers, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference], the Revolutionary Black Auto Workers, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Moorish Science Temple of America, and almost every other Black movement had high participation in Detroit. (p. 25)

Overall, Black Detroit is both a demographic and a history of how Black communities have navigated a city that has celebrated its presence and tried to police and repress it.

Latinx Detroit. The Latinx population in Detroit first began in the early 1900s with Texas Mexicans as Michigan's first Latinx members (Badillo, 2003). Primarily arriving for farm work, Latinx communities quickly increased their population as migrant laborers and by 1920, almost 5,000 Mexican identified people lived in different parts of southern Michigan (Badillo, 2003). While Detroit is home to diverse Latinx communities such as members from Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic (to name a few), the dominant history that comprises the Latinx community in the city is those of Mexican descent (Cashman, 2001). The federal government and the state of Michigan was influential in the increase of many Mexican and Puerto Rican laborers (Cashman, 2001). In the 1940s, many Mexican workers came through a government program known as the "Bracero Program" to recruit industrial laborers (Cashman, 2001). In the case of Mexican community members in Detroit, MI, "the temporary program was enacted to help Detroit's industry replace workers called to serve in the armed forces and continue to meet the demands of wartime production" (Cashman, 2001, p. 20). Similarly, in 1950, while Puerto

Ricans were given forced U.S. citizenship from the U.S. colonial forces, Puerto Rican community members were entering Detroit by the masses after being recruited for sugar beet work in Michigan. Upon egregious maltreatment both monetarily and physically, Puerto Rican community members left the sugar better fields seeking aid and entered Detroit where they were met with support from Catholic Priests and Mexicans residents (Cashman, 2001). According to Valdés (1991), after establishing a community home in Detroit, Puerto Rican workers sent for their families and thus grew a prominent community estimated to ten thousand within a generation (Cashman, 2001). Yet, Latinx community members across the diverse ethnic backgrounds experienced discrimination and racism (and continue to) especially during the movements of "Americanization" in the 1950s that harassed Latinx communities in forcing to become Americanized in their language and culture and the continual assault on their citizenship and access in the U.S. democracy (Cashman, 2001; Gonzales & Shields, 2014; Valdés, 1991).

Currently, Southwest Detroit holds the largest and ethnically-diverse Latinx population endearingly known as "Latino Detroit" (I use "Latinx" in this proposal) wherein 70% of its residents identify as such (ACS, 2018). The neighborhood is also a close-knit community where there are community-based organizations to serve families and support their activist efforts. In 2012, Latinx students made headlines for their protests against school closures and demands for more community voice in educational decision-making and quality teachers (Gonzales & Shields, 2014). In DPSCD, Latinx youth represent 13% of its students, making them the second largest demographic of students in the district (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). Latinx communities have a large stake in the fight for educational equity and have neighborhood associations who fight for these needs.

Arab Detroit. Political turmoil in the Middle East and instability in Arab homelands led to large migrations of the Arab population first at the end of the 19th century for economic opportunity, and then again after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (Nasser, 2012; Weaver, 2010). Arab Americans also migrated to Detroit for the automobile industry whereas by 1916, 500 Syrians were working for the auto factories and by 1930, there were nine thousand Arab-speaking Detroiters including Palestinians, Yemenis, and Iraqi Chaldeans (Abraham & Shryock, 2000). Although the cities are often used interchangeably, Detroit and Dearborn comprise many of the nationalities that represent "Arab Detroit" (Weaver, 2010). Metro Detroit is in the actual city and houses many Arab-owned businesses such as in the early 2000s where there were over 100 businesses along Warren Avenue (Abraham & Shryock, 2000). Dearborn, sometimes referenced as "larger Detroit" (Abraham & Shryock, 2000), is a neighboring suburb. Informal conversations with my Yemeni Muslim participants revealed that the suburb and urban divide sometimes can be rife with contention within the Arab American community as there are distinct class and ethnic differences between Metro Detroit and Dearborn.

As a state, Michigan is home to the largest Arab population outside of the Middle East (Baker et al., 2003; Nasser, 2012; Weaver, 2010). Statistically, "a full third of Dearborn's population is Arab American, which is significant considering Arab Americans constitute 1-3%... of the United States population as a whole" (Weaver, 2010, p. 10). While Arab Americans sometimes are referred to as a monolith, the ethnicities represented in their category is remarkably diverse. The populations within the Arab community all differ based on particular histories of their home countries, immigration stories, and the political turmoil present in the U.S. relationships with the different Middle Eastern countries (Baker et. al., 2003; Pennock, 2017; Weaver, 2010). As Weaver (2010) found in her dissertation study about the Arab

American community in Detroit, "the broad range of lifestyles, national backgrounds, and levels of assimilation found among Detroit's Arab and Arabic-speaking population make it a difficult community to represent, both intellectually and politically. It is not simply an American ethnic constituency" (p. 6). Each population is unique, and the make-up of Arab Americans in Detroit become even more complicated when learning the histories between each other and how they relate to one another. The complicated nature of the relationships between the Arab communities is present in the work of Detroit Vitality as the Yemeni community is most represented from the Arab American community in the YOC and larger network.

For the purposes of this study, I forefront the Yemeni Muslim population as they were the community that was most represented in the CBO and mostly made-up the youth who represented "Arab Detroit." After some time with the Yemeni youth in summer 2020, I learned how contentious their environments were in Dearborn with neighboring Arabic communities (i.e., Lebanese and Yemeni communities) which also affected their quality of schooling. In reading about the Yemeni community in Detroit, scholar Nasser (2012) unveiled the complicated relationship between Yemeni and Lebanese communities. She stated that the "Yemeni community is characterized as less affluent and working class, heavily reliant on the automotive industry…and severely impacted by the downturn in the industry" (Nasser, 2012, p. 5). In conversations with the Yemeni youth, I learned even more about how the Lebanese community was the largest Arabic community in larger Detroit at 37% of the population (Nasser, 2012). The Yemeni community led behind them comprised of 9% of the Arabic community. Nasser (2012) also spoke to how Yemeni immigrants were more socially isolated than any other Arabic immigrant as they had a history of moving back and forth between Yemen and the U.S. Finally,

Nasser (2012) argued that little is known about Yemeni immigrants and their participation in the U.S. political system which had implications for my dissertation.

Detroit Vitality Site Selection

My four years with Detroit Vitality, youth collective, and collaboration within Detroit has informed my decision to use the CBO as my dissertation site. I have spent time building rapport and I wanted to continue to support and learn from the youth who have been an integral part of my PhD journey. Detroit Vitality is a leading organization in education organizing given their intentional coalition building and strategic partnerships they garnered over the years. As an adult ally in the CBO, I was a part of their larger initiatives outside of the youth collective such as their fight for higher taxes on the wealthy to generate more revenue for the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD). I was also charged with contributing to the political education workshops to teach more about the history of educational activism in Detroit. Finally, this dissertation serves as a continuation of being a contributing reciprocal member of the CBO. In alignment with the principles of critical ethnography, I exhibited my reciprocity to the YOC as an adult ally. Altogether, I was able to serve in the space while also leveraging this service for my larger program of research on youth organizing in urban education.

Before beginning this dissertation study, I worked with Detroit Vitality first as a graduate student researcher and subsequently for my preliminary research project. In 2017, my pilot project explored Black youth's meaning making of their activism and how they assessed their organizing compared to their peers in Detroit. At this time, the CBO was predominantly Black, and they had not yet expanded or been intentional about diversifying their coalition to include greater Detroit communities. Also, initially I was not going to do my dissertation project with the organization. Since I was primarily interested in Black youth organizing, I aimed to find a

partner organization that was in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Detroit with Black communities. After discussing this plan with the CBO organizing director and some youth, Detroit Vitality members asked me to consider collaborating with them instead. The youth did not want me to leave my role as an adult ally, and I was not quite ready to leave them either, so I elected to partner with them for my dissertation. My decision was also rooted in the moral component that Madison (2005) makes note of in critical ethnography. In this vein, I centered her moral definition where she stated, "this means sacrificing what we *want* to do for what we *ought* to do" (Madison, 2005, p. 83). In my dissertation, this sacrifice proved to be an opportunity to create research that was of the community and in direct benefit to them.

Near the end of the summer of 2019 I had to ask myself difficult questions about the validity of my identity as a community-based researcher. I wrote in memos about wanting to be a community-based researcher and that meant, to me, that the research had to come of the community. Over the summer of 2019, I had grown closer to all the youth in the collective and struggled with determining how I would solely recruit Black youth. Due to these contentions, I made the decision to change my research project to include Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth's multiracial-multiethnic coalition building and its influence on them socio-politically. While this decision changed my study trajectory, it also allowed me to truly center the ethics of being a community-based researcher in that it is not about a researcher's full desires, but what is true of the needs and context of communities and to add to the literature on multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing.

The Structure and Profiles of the Youth Organizing Collective

In 2015, Detroit Vitality began to structure the youth organizing collective (YOC). At its beginning, the YOC was comprised of young people who had prior affiliations with adult

members of the CBO (i.e., parental involvement or sibling involvement). By the summer of 2019, the YOC resembled a coalition. Detroit Vitality was understood to be the umbrella organization that brought neighborhood organizations throughout Detroit together for educational justice. Similarly, the YOC was also representative of the neighborhood organizations but included more youth-centered partners. Most of the youth in the YOC had to apply to be a member and represent their partner organization. In accounts from the youth a part of this study, some applied to the YOC from their own interests and some were recruited by their adult ally. Each partner organization, and its youth representatives, had an adult ally who was tasked to accompany the youth to the YOC meetings. In these roles, both youth and adult allies served as the liaisons between the larger coalition of the YOC and its educational justice efforts, and their partner organizations specific efforts. Partner organizations were recruited determined by their particular youth work and sometimes personal connections to adult members within the CBO network. The coalition structure served to be a source of sharing information, political training among the young people and adult allies, and a place to garner greater people power. Quickly, the YOC grew with Detroit's major racial-ethnic enclaves and their various ethnic-racial justice efforts represented. Thus, the YOC became a multiracial-multiethnic youth coalition.

During my data collection, the youth collective was comprised of 21 youth across the racial groups of predominantly Black, Latinx, Arab American youth, and one youth identified as white. The one youth who identified as white was not an active participant (due to various family obligations) but, for transparency, I included her within the larger profile (see Table 3-1). Upon further exploration and while in data collection, I learned that there were 8 neighborhood organizations within the YOC. These neighborhood organizations were across Detroit with

predominantly Black and Latinx members in multiple organizations across the city. In this dissertation, seven of the organizations were represented. Two of the Black youth participants were a part of the YOC since it began and did not have a partner organization, so they were solely considered as Detroit Vitality members. In total, the YOC (including those who were not a part of this study) included eight organizations where they trained, learned, and organized with one another. They had three co-chairs who coincidentally represented each major racial-ethnic identity of the YOC and who all identified as young women of color. Below, Table 3-1 represents the profiles of the youth collective at-large and Table 3-2 depicts the different neighborhood organizations and my youth participants representation within them. My specific participants will be in the section of "research participants."

Table 3-1: Profile of Youth in the Youth Organizing Collective

Black	Latinx	Arab American	White	Female	Male	Non-Binary	Low-income	Detroit Schools	Age	Years in CBO
6	9	5	1	14	5	2	21	21	13-18	1- 3.5

Table 3-2: Youth Organizing Collective Neighborhood Organizations

Organization Pseudonyms	Majority Racial-Ethnic Identity	Detroit Neighborhood	Number[8] of Participants in YOU DREAM
HOPE	Arab American	Dearborn	2[9]
Alliance	Black	Northwest	0
ACT NOW	Black	Northeast	1
Families Together	Black	Northwest	1
Co-Create	Latinx	Southwest	1
Initiating Change	Latinx	Southwest	1
JustUS	Latinx	Southwest	1
Latinidad United	Latinx	Southwest	1

[8] These numbers do not include the 2 Black youth participants who were not a part of neighborhood organizations
[9] One of the youth represented in HOPE and later represented in Figure 4, had to leave my project after one interview.

Recruitment of Research Participants

My recruitment of the youth in the collective engaged in purposeful selection but took on various sampling strategies and techniques. Purposeful selection is "…a strategy for accessing appropriate data that fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints and challenges being faced" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 148). While I used purposeful selection, I also utilized different sampling strategies to nuance and complicate my research interests of how youth of color organize across race and ethnicity. Given that I was interested in youth of color organizing across Detroit, I used homogenous sampling (Emmel, 2013; Patton, 2002) with youth who identified as youth organizers in the space of the CBO rather than their smaller neighborhood organizations. In addition to homogenous sampling of the youth organizers, I also used criterion sampling (Emmel, 2013; Patton, 2002) so that my participants could speak to their organizing over time in Detroit Vitality. I sought youth who had been in the CBO since the beginning of the summer of 2019 because they were a part of the orienting summer institute and had engaged in some of the collective training with one another. In total, I paired purposeful selection with homogenous and criterion sampling to further investigate the multiracial-multiethnic coalition building of the youth organizers.

Given my rapport with the YOC, I was quickly able to recruit youth to be a part of my study. Before the pandemic, I gave a presentation about the aims of my research at their annual Martin Luther King Jr. overnight retreat where I received most of my youth participants interest. After my presentation, I distributed a sign-up list of youth who were interested. Initially, I was not able to recruit Arab American girls at the retreat because they were not permitted to stay overnight by their families. Instead, I followed up with them at the following youth collective meeting and asked them to join my study if they were interested.

After my initial presentation at the MLK retreat, at the collective meetings from late January to late February 2020 I would remind the interested youth that I needed permission forms. Several youths wanted to join my study but did not fit the criteria of time in the collective since the summer of 2019. Some of the youth who I mentored over the years, emphasized that I needed permission slips from their peers and would make announcements in the bi-weekly collective meetings. They would announce "Naomi needs to become a doctor and she needs our help" or "please don't forget your permission forms. We need to help Naomi!" These announcements were often met with much embarrassment for me and much laughter among the youth because our running joke in the collective was how hard it was to get permission slips back from young people (like in most programs and school activities). Of note, since my study began in January of 2020, I received all necessary consent forms from the youth before COVID-19 which allowed me to continue my dissertation when in-person research was halted. After confirmation from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I was approved to continue my study with all data collection on Zoom (the common video sharing application during COVID-19).

As I was receiving permission slips, I began my initial interviews. While still seeking permission slips from the young people, I followed my interest sheet and personally followed up with the young people (either in person at the YOC meetings or in text) for their forms. By the end of February 2020, I had reached my youth participant goal number and received twelve permission slips which represented four Black youth, four Latinx youth, and four Arab American youth. After the start of COVID-19, I presented all the youth with the option to opt-out of my study. Noted in Chapter 1, Detroit was one of the hardest hit cities from COVID-19 which caused a lot of anxiety for the young people in the collective. In the early virtual meetings, the

youth would talk about their levels of stress and fear of the pandemic. Due to this, I was responsive to the capacity of the youth and offered to stop my study with them.

One of the Arab American participants, Zara Almasi, left the collective for personal family reasons after her first interview and two of the Arab American male participants communicated that did not have the capacity to be in my study and navigate school and life during COVID-19. In total, nine of the youth decided to remain participants and were a part of the rest of my data collection until October 2020. All nine of the youth were "diehards" meaning that they represented the youth who were the most active and often volunteered to lead the various activities within the YOC. After interacting with my youth participants from the summer of 2019, it was of no surprise that my participants were the very same young people that continually led the actions, facilitated the meetings, signed up for additional committees, and offered organizing ideas in the collective. Below, Table 3-3 illustrates the profiles of the youth who were a part of my data collection, including the one interview from Zara.

Table 3-3: YOU DREAM Youth Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Racial-Ethnic Identity**	**Neighborhood Organization**	**Grade**	**Gender Identity**	**Years in the CBO**
Zara Almasi	16	Arab American	HOPE	11th	Female	1
Dina Azmi*[10]	17	Arab American	HOPE	12th	Female	2
Amirah Davis	18	Black	CBO	12th	Non-Binary	5
Brandi Smith*	17	Black	CBO	12th	Female	4
Sky Vaughn	15	Black	ACT NOW	9th	Female	3
Kendra Wood	18	Black	Families Together	12th	Female	1
Joe Camarena	18	Latinx	Initiating Change	12th	Male	4

[10] Asterisks represent the youth who were the co-chairs of the YOC.

Nina Hernandez	16	Latinx	Latinidad United	11th	Female	2
Xiomara Lopez*	15	Latinx	JustUS	10th	Female	3
Fatima Medina	16	Latinx	Co-Create	10th	Female	1

Data Sources and Collection

I conducted participant observations, interviews, focus groups, and collected documents from their agendas and strategy meetings from January-September 2020. I aligned my data collection timeline with their organizing cycle to ensure that I gathered data from the "action and evaluation" phases which were most pertinent to my study. Discussed in Chapter 1, the youth organized from an organizing cycle that included four phases: listening, research, action, and evaluation and celebration. The listening phase was how the young people selected their organizing issue for the year. The youth would engage their peers in school with surveys to learn of the most imminent education needs and would select their issue from these surveys. In the research phase, the youth would conduct research on the top issues gathered from their surveys and learn more about what was the state of it in Detroit. For example, young people learned that unhealthy school lunches were a common issue and they investigated who supplied DPSCD school lunches, how much they paid for the services, and then created an action plan to share information and advocate for healthier food in schools. The third phase was action which was how the young people decided how they would advocate for their selected issue, create a list of demands, and enact their organizing plan. Finally, the young people engaged in an evaluation and celebration phase where they would evaluate their entire cycle, learn from triumphs and mistakes, plan to improve their organizing, and celebrate their labor over the past year.

Given my interest in the YOC's organizing cycle's "action and evaluation phase", I concluded participant observations in July 2020 when their organizing cycle ended. Due to COVID-19, the cycle was altered to address virtual schooling needs (i.e., access to technology, advocacy for more information from school administrators, and organizing for shortened virtual school schedules) which required a restart of their cycle and a truncated version to more quickly receive resources. I also altered my goal of two cross-cultural focus groups to one due lack of time from the readjustment phase to Zoom collective meetings. Yet, even with needed alterations and delays, I was able to collect data from all my methods.

The focus group and interviews allowed for me to learn more from the youth's lived experiences as organizers in Detroit and their thoughts and perceptions of their multiracial-multiethnic coalition building. As Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) designate, focus groups and interviews "allows participants to share their experiences in the group setting and then have individual time to elaborate on their personal experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, including any impact of the focus group" (p. 177). Although I began with interviews, I was able to follow-up on comments in the ethnic-racial specific and cross-cultural focus groups in their second interviews. The participant observations were most helpful towards understanding how the youth were working together and training one another in their organizing cycle. Below, I outline each of my methods and collection processes.

Participant Observer Role and Activities

Participant observations were optimal for my study as participant observers participate "…fully in the ongoing activities of the research setting and members of the setting know the identity of the researcher" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 206). As a participant observer, throughout January to July 2020, I observed the youth collective meetings, co-chair meetings,

retreats, and rallies. After March 2020, all our meetings were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19. As a support to the youth co-chairs and to assist the on-boarding of the incoming new Youth Organizing Director, I co-facilitated the in-person and virtual bi-weekly (turned weekly after COVID-19 started) co-chair meetings. As a matter of ethics in virtual data collection, I focused on the youth participants of my study which proved to be quite helpful given that they were the leaders in the YOC and volunteered for the most organizing work. In the YOC meetings, I would make note of when my participants led the group, their interactions with one another in how they would unmute and speak, and moments when they only engaged in the virtual chat. Because of accessibility, all the youth were accessing Zoom on their phones so there were often internet connection issues and most of the youth would not have their cameras on making it difficult to see their reactions. The collective created a "cameras on" rule so that they could recreate in-person spaces by seeing each other's faces but even with the rule, the young people would remain with their cameras off because of noted insecurities (e.g. young people would talk about how they looked or did not want to show where they we are at in their homes).

While my critical qualitative study using ethnographic methods was conducted predominantly online, I maintain that my study was still in fact a critical qualitative study. In the research of "virtual ethnography", "connective ethnography", and "netnography" these methods are defined as the studying of online cultures and are most often with unknown participants and are without prior relationships (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017; Kozinets, 2002; Lester, 2020). Given this, my study is unique in that, my dissertation shifted to online due to COVID-19 contexts and was not a study of an online environment. Rather, my study remained to be of the young people's organizing that moved to virtual spaces because of a pandemic. Therefore, I do not fit within the virtual ethnography literature but used digital tools such as videoconference-

based interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. In Table 3-4, I show the different data points and provide further detail about each participant observation data point in the following three sections.

Participant Observations of Youth Collective Meetings. In the virtual youth collective space, I typed my notes in an online journal while I participated within the meetings. I opted to not record my online meetings because youth communicated they were uncomfortable with showing their faces on Zoom while at home or in transit (i.e., some youth would run errands while being in the Zoom meetings). Additionally, I prioritized my participant role as an adult ally because the youth needed additional support with facilitation and the transition to online meetings. I was often tasked by the co-chairs to share their different presentation slides, videos, and trainings given my ability to share my screen easier with my extra desktop at home. In these meetings, I was able to type my notes while participating in the meeting because of my different computer screens. I documented moments when the youth would name race and ethnicity such as when they spoke to the YOC about their specific community's needs during COVID-19 or the literal naming of ethnic-racial identities. For example, during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, young people would explicitly name anti-Blackness and non-Black youth discussed their plans to be in solidarity with Black communities. I also noted instances when they were strategizing for their organizing work and moments of tension among the youth (i.e., inequitable sharing of labor or disagreements about organizing decisions). I also noted issues between the adults and youth with the organizing process and topics, and when there seemed to be sentiments of racial or cultural boundary crossing. As an example, during the resurgence of BLM, some of the Black youth would update the collective about protesting in the Detroit protests. Or moments in the collective where all the youth planned to attend protests together in solidarity with the

Black community and was a part of BLM events in their partner organizations (e.g. some Latinx youth went on a city-wide bike ride around Detroit in solidarity for Black Lives). In these moments, I typed their exact words, questions, retelling of the events, and made note of how the other youth responded both verbally and in the Zoom chat box.

Participant Observations of Co-Chair Meetings. During the co-chair meetings, I was often more in my participant role because we were a small group that ranged from 1-2 adults and 2-3 of the youth in any given co-chair meeting. While in person, I recorded my thoughts in audio recording after the meetings and wrote memos when I arrived at home. At the in-person meetings, I wrote down shorthand notes when I was co-facilitating such as discussion topics and I noted more substantive notes when I was not in the role of facilitator or co-facilitator. During COVID-19, the virtual meetings allowed me to take more copious notes during the co-chair meetings because I had more ability to multitask due to my multiple computer screens. I made note of how the co-chairs made decisions with one another, how they pushed each other when they did not agree or had different ideas, their thoughts on the progress or state of the larger YOC, and when they referenced their ethnic-racial identities.

Participant Observations of Retreats and Rallies. Typically, the CBO hosts at least one retreat for the youth and one conference in May. They May conference was cancelled due to COVID-19, but we were able to have our onboarding in-person MLK retreat in January where new youth members learned more about the CBO's processes and selected a campaign issue for the year. At the MLK retreat, I took handwritten notes about decision-making, conversations and debates on their issue for the year, and took note of how many youths voted and agreed with one another when they dialogued about pressing decisions (i.e., campaign issues and check-ins about energy during the meetings).

During COVID-19, and during the BLM resurgence, the collective wanted to host a rally in solidarity with the larger BLM movement and to bring more awareness to the YOC's defund the school police campaign. This desire resulted in the youth holding a socially distant rally in downtown Detroit in June 2020 to bring greater awareness to their issues. As an adult ally, I was charged with ensuring we maintained on the rally's schedule. Given the needs of the rally to ensure the safety of the youth and my role as the logistics coordinator, I was unable to note my observations in the moment but typed my ideas and memories when I arrived at home. I used the different organizing documents from the rally and made note of who was represented on the agenda, what the youth spoke about when they were on stage about the police, and the closing rally comments.

Interviews

Interviews were a key part of my study because I wanted to learn from and center the youth's voice, activism, and experiences within Detroit. Madison (2005) speaks to the criticality of ethnographic interviews and stated,

> the ethnographic interview opens realms of meaning that permeate beyond rote information or finding the 'truth of the matter.' The interviewee is not an object, but a subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of a story. Interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together. (p. 25)

This partnership and dialogue that Madison (2005) denotes was critical to my study because I interviewed them during a global pandemic. From February-March 2020, I did my first-round interviews with eight youth either at the organization's site or at a local coffee shop. The last two first round interviews I did in March 2020 via Zoom because of the COVID-19 outbreak. These

interviews were semi-structured (Madison, 2005) to encompass the necessary topics I wanted to address in relation to my research questions and to allow for natural conversation because I still wanted to center their voice. As an example, sometimes the youth would talk about issues in school with their peers or racist incidents and I would ask them follow-up questions. Some of these discussions were not exactly in line with my protocol but I maintained my interview's semi-structure and allowed for what they wanted to also be a focal point. In my protocols (see Appendices), my first interview with the youth was about learning their personal histories as youth in Detroit, their family's lineage in the city, and how they came to the work of organizing both in their neighborhood organizations and the larger collective.

My second-round interviews were all conducted via Zoom and began in August 2020 and ended in early September 2020. Initially, I planned to conduct final round interviews before their inaugural July summer institute where they recruit new youth, but COVID-19 derailed these plans. The summer was emotionally difficult for a lot of my youth participants because it was at the height of COVID-19 and BLM protests. Again, I privileged the wellness of the youth (and myself) and decided to conduct interviews at the end of the summer when the youth had more time**,** and when we all had developed a greater sense of normalcy within COVID-19. Six of my closeout interviews were conducted in August and the last three occurred in early September. I focused these interviews on the youth's assessment of the year and their personal development as youth organizers. I asked them their thoughts on their personal growth and, more importantly, their dreams for what their organizing could influence in Detroit and society at-large. I also asked them about their awareness of different political issues and what they thought of their growth and learning in a multiracial-multiethnic youth coalition.

The interviews were both personal narrative and topical. As defined by Madison (2005), a personal narrative "…is an individual perspective and expression of an event, experience, or point of view" and a topical interview is "…the point of view given to a particular subject, such as a program, an issue, or a process" (p. 25). I used personal narrative to glean into what the youth thought of themselves as organizers in Detroit, their views as young people in a highly contested urban educational space, and their experiences being in a multiracial-multiethnic coalition. The topical interview was utilized for youth to speak on their particular processes of the organizing cycle and assessments of the organization. While maintaining their semi-structured nature, these interviews proved to be fruitful for my research questions and the overall aims of this dissertation.

Focus Groups

In total, I video recorded four focus groups via Zoom which comprised of both racial-ethnic specific focus groups with Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth, respectively; and, one cross-cultural focus group with six of my youth participants. I aimed to conduct two cross-cultural focus groups and three ethnic-racial specific focus groups, but due to COVID-19 I could not conduct an initial collective focus group because it was scheduled at the beginning of the pandemic. I readjusted my schedule and began with ethnic-racial identity focus groups. The Latinx and Arab American focus group took place in June of 2020 and the Black focus group was conducted in July 2020 due to scheduling issues. These focus groups were created to allow for each ethnic-racial group to have the space to speak as freely as they could about their experiences in the collective from their ethnic-racial vantage points. Of course, this was complicated with my identity as a Black woman, so I emphasized to all the youth to dialogue as if in conversation with one another and to only speak to what they were comfortable in

discussing. The Arab American focus group only included one youth because at the time of this data point, the other Arab American youth participant left the collective for personal reasons. My protocols were the same for each racial-ethnic group. I asked each ethnic-racial group about their different neighborhood organizations, experiences in the collective, and their viewpoints on the multiracial-multiethnic make-up of the YOC. I asked them to center their particular racial-ethnic identities in responding to the questions I posed and also allowed for tangent topics to arise when they wanted to talk about particular experiences, maintaining my semi-structure.

The three ethnic-racial identity focus groups of the Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth were of particular importance to learn about the influence of the multiracial-multiethnic make-up of the collective. Focus groups are a great conduit through which dynamics of a group can create larger stories (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This dynamism and group story creation was important for the ethnic-racial focus groups because they had the opportunity to talk about their communities' unique educational experiences within Detroit. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) also state that focus groups generate "unique data… as participants disagree, explain themselves, and query each other, often negotiating their original ideas with new thoughts resulting from the conversation" (p. 167). This negotiation and navigation were integral as no identity is monolithic, and these ethnic-racial focus groups allowed for this nuancing to occur.

Lastly, I held a cross-cultural closeout focus group with six of my youth participants during August 2020. Unfortunately, three of the youth (who also happened to be the co-chairs), were not able to attend the scheduled focus group due to scheduling issues. This cross-cultural collective focus group followed the same format of the closeout interviews as I wanted them to reflect together on their year with one another, the impacts of COVID-19, and their views on organizing in such a diverse coalition. I posed each question to the group and allowed them to

talk amongst themselves and typed notes to myself when they spoke to points that were connected to my research questions such as race and ethnicity topics, organizing in Detroit, and their critiques overall.

All of my focus groups had an open-ended design that granted "…participants more freedom to speak to their own experiences and use language in ways that [were] more meaningful to them…" and allowed "…the group dynamic to flow, creating unique narrative whose power does not lie in conversational conceptions of generalizability" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 180). The open-ended format was useful as I wanted to provide the space for the youth to be able to build knowledge and understanding with one another as they thought about and assessed their coalition. This format was also useful for the racial-ethnic focus groups as they contributed to one another's thought processes which allowed for possible synergies and differences.

Document Collection

To further bolster my data and garner a greater understanding of the organizing work, I received agendas and strategy meeting documents from the YOC. Each YOC meeting and co-chair meeting had supplemental agendas that I used to gather more information on how they navigated their meetings and progressed throughout the year with their tactics. While not a primary data source, these documents were useful to situate the youth's organizing and how they divided labor among one another. Below, Table 3-4 highlights the various data points discussed throughout this section and the following section will delve into my analysis process.

Table 3-4: Data Collection Points

Data Points	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
YOC Meetings	1	3	2	4	3	4	1	0	0	18
Co-Chair Meetings	0	1	1	0	3	4	0	0	0	9
Interviews	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	6	3	19

Focus Groups	0	0	0	0	0	2*	1**	1	0	4
Retreats & Rallies	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2

Data Analysis Techniques

In total, this dissertation included ethnographic fieldnotes, interview and focus group transcripts, and YOC meeting artifacts. To analyze this data, I utilized an iterative coding process with supplemental memos. All de-identified data was stored in a secure online folder in MBox. Due to the volume of data and with the support of generous research grants, all interviews and focus groups were professionally transcribed. I went through each transcription by simultaneously listening to the audio and reading the transcript to check for accuracy. In past experiences, I have often noticed how professional transcribers are not familiar with youth's use of slang or do not fully understand my participants conversations. Therefore, I cleaned all transcripts and included the youth's hesitations, use of slang, and emotional displays (i.e., laughter) to make sure that their voices were as closely represented to what they said as possible.

In my initial drafts of creating my codebook, I reviewed my first interview to help create codes and then reviewed other first round interviews to compare and see if there were codes that needed to be added from the other interviews. I first created data-informed codes derived from the interviews (e.g. "culture", "YOC family", "silenced", "power"), identified subsamples of these codes, compared them across the interview data, created additional codes, and then reviewed my focus groups with this same list (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011). I used my interviews and focus groups to create a draft codebook because they were my predominant data sources. I then used these drafts of codes and engaged in another iteration of review but with the focus of theory-driven codes from my conceptual framework (e.g. "self-

* Asterisks indicate the racial-ethnic focus groups.

awareness", "social awareness", "global awareness", "resistance") (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). I therefore had two columns of codes that were data-driven and theory driven to could encompass the aims of my study. I then used this combined list to engage in my participant observations and engaged in another iterative process to document if data could not be coded with my draft codebook and added additional codes (e.g."YOC conflict", "YOC favorite experience", "YOC leadership").

After I engaged in several revisions of my codebooks, to increase accuracy, I reviewed my initial codes that helped me develop my coding schema. After finalizing my codebook, I began to re-code my interviews, focus groups and participant observations. I then used these codes to make note of themes. To assist this process, I used *Atlas.ti 8.1.3* qualitative data software to assist in the complex coding strategies mentioned above. With *Atlas.ti* I was able to compare codes across different data sources and methods to reveal more fluid themes which was also a part of my constant comparative analysis (Fram, 2013; Glaser, 1965; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

I reviewed document artifacts to further investigate young people's assessments of experiences through the agendas and strategies they would note in different data points. I used these artifacts to corroborate what I was finding in the youth's description of events, their perceptions as noted in interviews and focus groups, and what was present in the different YOC meetings. These engagements allowed for rigorous triangulation to analyze how their different perceptions, tactics, and ideas were discussed, taken up, critiqued, and implemented in their organizing work.

Next, I delve into Chapters 4 and 5 and key findings from the youth organizers and YOC's organizer identities, coalition building, ethnic-racial intersections and tensions, and overall meaning making by being with their coalition for educational justice.

Chapter 4 Synergies of Youth Organizing: A Youth Organizer and Collective Identity

Synergies involve a fluidity and traversing boundaries in a given context to encompass something greater. If one were to relate this to the youth organizing collective (YOC), we would see how they cross socio-cultural boundaries to come together to build greater youth power for educational justice in Detroit. These boundaries are youth's ethnic-racial identities, neighborhoods, and partner organizations they represent throughout the city. Within what I am calling "Synergies of Youth Organizing," data suggest youth are in these "synergies" where they more fully recognize their people power as a part of their coalition building. The following two chapters will speak to the different synergies that the individual youth bring together by their own personal leadership and by being in collaboration with one another in the YOC. I address each of my research questions on how the youth organizers understood and described their organizer identities (Research Question 1), and how being with the YOC informed and advanced youths' coalition building (Research Question 2). I also pinpoint youth organizers' identification and navigation of their ethnic-racial intersections and tensions (Research Question 3), and how the YOC's cross-cultural organizing influenced youths' resistance, critical consciousness, and activism (Research Question 4). In this chapter, I answer my research questions and present my findings through the what I identify as three of the five fluid principles of my larger conceptual framework: collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, and holistic striving. For instance, data show how youth determine and create their organizer and collective identities by (1) curating a *collective vision* for their communities; (2) utilizing *communal reflexive praxis*

through peer learning; and (3) enhancing their coalition building by *holistically striving* to be informed by, and inclusive of, the youth's salient social identities.

Throughout this chapter, I also reveal the ways in which youth organizers in this study not only spoke to how they personally came to their organizing work, but also to how being part of a collective influenced them, supported the development of their critical consciousness, and advanced their coalition building. Due to the YOC's structure of a coalition, I use *YOC*, *collective*, and *coalition* interchangeably to discuss their youth organizing space. Through youth's shared stories, I emphasize that because of their own struggles in their home communities and their Detroit schools, they did not want the generations after them to suffer like them. Young people described a journey in which they spoke to their development over time in the YOC, and their strategies in how they have pushed their peers within the space to be more critical and culturally competent. Finally, these youth pushed not only me as a researcher to better explicate their brilliance and lived realities, but also pushed themselves to reflect and examine their own decision-making by actualizing their dreams and being a youth organizer with other youth of color. In the first section of this chapter, I briefly introduce the partnerships between youth organizers and adult allies in the YOC to provide a foundation for how each youth organizer was introduced to the collective. Together, in all of these narratives and organizing, Amirah, Brandi, Dina, Fatima, Joe, Kendra, Nina, Sky, Zara, and the other youth in the YOC highlighted the intricacies of themselves and with one another in the collective to further their personal and collective critical consciousness.

Adult Allies Initial Roles in Youths' Organizing

A large focus of this study is the agency, brilliance, and coalition building of Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth organizers in Detroit. In this effort, I forefront the lived

experiences and meaning making of the young people who were a part of the CBO's larger intergenerational, multiracial-multiethnic network and more specifically, the autonomous youth organizing collective. But, as noted in Chapter 1, a key component of the YOC—and most youth organizing spaces—is the work and support of youths' adult allies or youth workers. In the Detroit YOC, the adults who supported the work of the youth were allies who played integral roles in their overall youth development as well as their organizer identities. All ten young people in this study explained that they came to organizing work either by direct recruitment from an adult ally in the YOC and partner organizations, or through the combination of an adult ally's recruitment, encouragement, and a family tie to Detroit Vitality. These processes were important elements of the youth organizers' access to the YOC and their experiences as youth organizers a part of the larger multiracial-multiethnic collective. Additionally, while youths' motivation to join the YOC was mostly initiated by adult allies or familial ties, each young person enacted their agency by staying a part of the YOC after their initial introductions to the space.

Most of the youth in this study were recruited by being a part of an affiliated partner organization in the CBO network, which is the most common route to the YOC as the partner organizations were an intentional structural element in the coalition. Particularly, the YOC recruitment strategies proved to be important access points for the young people, and the youth would later use these same tactics to recruit for more YOC involvement. For instance, the young people employed "classroom takeovers" to seek input from their school peers on their campaigns, and this was the same avenue through which Nina was introduced to the YOC. Nina recounted that she first heard of the work of the YOC when long-time adult ally, Ricky, came to her school and asked her class to take a survey. Ricky went over the work of the collective and,

after collecting survey responses, asked her class if they wanted to join the fight of educational justice. Nina reflected on how it was questions on the survey such as "What are the top three things you want in your school?," "What do you think your school spends the most money on?," and "If you could, what would you spend the most money on?" that attracted her to the coalition. Similarly, but through her friend (who would become her comrade in the collective), Zara learned of the work of Detroit Vitality first from a youth organizer at her charter school. Zara's fellow Arab American peer, in casual conversation about their weekends, showed her a sunset from a field trip they went on that made her want to join the organization. While it was not the educational justice work that initially garnered her interest, Zara very quickly learned more about Detroit Vitality, joined her partner organization HOPE to gain access, and then volunteered to be another youth representative in the larger coalition of the YOC where it became "one of the best decisions" she made. Zara spoke to how being a part of the YOC gleaned her a lot of the education problems and allowed her "realize how many problems" she had in her school.

Xiomara, Fatima, Joe, and Kendra all learned about the work of the YOC by being a part of their neighborhood organizations throughout Detroit. Xiomara's organization was drastically changing after their lead adult ally decided to leave her home organization. Because Xiomara's neighborhood organization was a member of the larger YOC, adult allies Ricky and Tera knew more intimately about the instability and therefore began recruiting more of the youth to be a part of the collective. At first, Xiomara shared that she mainly joined because the adult allies were offering a trip to New York as a part of their training, but soon she became more involved because she loved the work of organizing. In discussing her organizing trajectory she shared:

> When I went to my first meeting I kinda fell in love with it at first. I was like "wow, like you guys do all of this?!"… It's crazy how we [youth] can be part of something and then at the end be like "I did that."

Xiomara also discussed that when she first joined, she was intimidated because she felt "they [other youth in the YOC] had higher knowledge" but over time, she participated more in the space and became more comfortable. Joe was also directly recruited by his adult ally and mentor Ricky who, at the beginning of Joe's youth organizing, was the lead adult organizer in the YOC and adult lead in Joe's neighborhood organization in Southwest Detroit. In his interview, Joe talked about how he was an organizer because of Ricky and was glad he decided to be a representative on behalf of his neighborhood organization to the YOC. I asked him what made him volunteer to represent his organization and he said, "I would say Ricky, him constantly reminding me [to apply]." At Joe's time of recruitment, he said there were other youth who wanted to represent for his group in the YOC, but because Ricky pointedly recruited him, and "in order to stop him [Ricky] from bothering [him]," he joined and then stayed because he found passion within the work.

Amirah, Sky, Dina, and Brandi all joined the YOC because of familial connections to the CBO via their siblings and parents. Amirah's brother was a part of their partner organization in Southwest Detroit and they were one of the founding youth members of the YOC. Just like the youth mentioned above, they were a part of their neighborhood organization and the adult allies from the YOC came to them and asked if Amirah wanted to be a part of the YOC. At this time, the YOC's coalition structure was not fully developed, so they were mainly a part of the collective. Dina and Sky also had siblings who were a part of their neighborhood organizations ACT NOW and HOPE, respectively, and therefore, had an entry point. Brandi also had familial

ties to Detroit Vitality, but it was both her Mom and older sister who were organizers in the CBO and YOC. She recounted that her Mom "forced" her to go because it was easier for her Mother's driving route, but over time she said "… I started caring." For Brandi, she was candid in her lack of desire for organizing, but when she experienced her school closing in 10th grade she was invigorated to be more involved stating, "… when it [school closures] happened to me, I was like 'oh okay, all right, cool', now I gotta start working for it, I gotta start participating, I gotta start being active." Altogether, the youth organizers in this study became organizers as a result of recruitment from adult allies, family members, and their home organizations.

By joining the collective, the youth organizers gained access to different politicized, ethnic-racial youth, and political learnings overall of how to organize for their personal passions and collective educational justice. The adult allies and coalition of the YOC were integral to youths' organizer and activist development.

Collective Visioning: Curating an *Isang Bagsak*[11] Mantra as a Youth Organizer Identity

Below, I link together how young people tied their organizing to one another and as a part of larger change for Detroit's educational landscape across two subsections. I reveal youths' personal narratives about why they wanted to become a changemaker for themselves and extend this to how youth were enacting visionary leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis, & Mckee, 2002). Goleman et al. (2002) argues that a visionary approach to leadership is the most effective as it inspires others to center the grand purpose even in otherwise menial tasks. In this instance of the youth organizers, I assert that youth are visionary leaders where they "… articulate a purpose that rings true for themselves and attune it to values shared by the people they lead" (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 56). In this visionary approach, I situate the youth in the YOC as emotionally

[11] *Isang bagsak* is from the Tagalog language and means "one down." This saying is derived from the 1960s U.S. farmworkers movement that will be more fully discussed later.

intelligent and empathetic beings who effectively inspire one another to be the arbiters of social change within Detroit. I then close this major finding of youths' visionary ethos and collective youth organizer identity by highlighting how they understood and garnered a greater collective visioning for their communities. I define *collective visioning* as how young people articulate their organizing aims as freedom dreaming for themselves and their peers by (a) enacting their emotional intelligence and empathy in positioning themselves as changemakers; (b) defining who their organizing is for and why; and (c) electing to be the people who will generate greater educational equality for themselves, their peers, and future generations. Together, these sections assist me in answering my first research question about how youth understood and described their organizer identities.

Being a Visionary for Self: A Part of a Youth Organizer Identity

As an organizer, first and foremost, you must uphold that you are capable of garnering agency skills (i.e., strategic thinking and tools to help one achieve their goals) and believe that change is possible (Larson & Angus, 2011). As a baseline, organizers may believe that change may not happen in their lifetimes, but they work towards a society that is rooted in justice and eradicating inequalities. Similarly, the youth organizers in the YOC envisioned that they could change their circumstances and, as a part of their organizing, often identified as changemakers, which I extend to collective visionaries. They not only held this collective visionary identity, but also cultivated this disposition in the collective. In the YOC, adult allies and the youth tasked one another with recruiting more young people into the collective and encouraged each other to engage more youth to attend their events. One of their staple events that aimed to attract more organizer recruits was the YOC summer institute. Each summer they planned for an end-of-the-summer institute that comprised of workshops, political education, relationship-building, and

overall plans to start their organizing cycle in the fall semester. These plans were a part of learning and enacting their "train the trainer" model wherein they learned different training techniques (i.e., facilitation skills and how to power map for campaigns) to generate groups of young people who could teach one another needed organizing skills. In a collective meeting on July 8, 2020, Amirah—one of the first youth to ever join the YOC and non-binary Black youth—lead a goal setting facilitation for the summer institute. In this facilitation, youth in the collective (ranging from 13–18 years old) stated they wanted the institute to introduce novices to organizing and educational justice, as well as some organizing tactics that were representative of the work within the YOC. As Amirah was asking for feedback on what participants should leave the institute understanding, Nina volunteered, unmuted herself, and said, "I want them to understand that they're not too little to make a difference … a lot of people are discouraged from this field of work [youth organizing] because they feel like we can't change things." As a Latinx girl who first joined the collective in the late summer of 2019, Nina was newer to organizing compared to some of her peers within the YOC. Given Nina's novelty to organizing, and her own recent development of self-efficacy, it was important to her that newer youth organizers learned or understood that they could be a changemaker no matter their age (Ginwright, 2010; Terriquez, 2015). In this way, even as a youth organizer for one year, Nina applied her knowledge of needing to believe in oneself to become an organizer, thus sharing her vision for her peers to develop this self-awareness in their organizer onboarding—an important tenet in the social justice youth development (SJYD) framework.

In the YOC, the youth often focused on their age and capabilities as indicators of their agency. Given the harmful and stereotypical portrayal of apathetic youth of color who do not participate in "traditional" forms of civic engagement (Gadsden et al., 2019; Mirra & Garcia,

2017), the young people in the YOC who opposed these declarations tended to address these stereotypes in their organizing. Like Nina, Latinx youth Fatima talked about recognizing her efficaciousness due to her organizing. She stated,

> … I can do a lot more than I thought that I could that I actually like, have done like a lot of good things and that … no matter what age you are, you can always take a stand and you can always do great things … I always thought, you know, you had to be a certain age to like do certain things but now being in the collective, it taught me you can do whatever you want at what[ever] age …

In a focus group with the Latinx youth, Nina shared how she noticed that her peers judgmentally questioned why she organized because they did not believe organizing or activism could alter their realities. In many interactions with Nina over a year and a half, she often discussed her yearning for her peers to believe they could change their circumstances. Much like her desire for her peers, she stated in the Latinx focus group change is "all within yourself," alluding to how becoming a changemaker begins with oneself first. Connectedly, in an individual interview where I asked her what she learned about herself as a youth organizer she stated the following:

> … I'm like capable of a lot. I always thought it was just the adult allies that should be, um, like the one in charge and telling people what to do or creating, like, these surveys or, um, Zoom calls, but I could actually do that. Like, there's nothing saying that I shouldn't …

Taken together, data showed that, as a part of their organizing, both Fatima and Nina grew in their self-awareness, and further developed a visionary ethos for what they knew they could do as arbiters of change, resulting in the advancement of their sense of agency. This identity was rooted in their development of envisioning a more just educational future that they

could be a part of creating as a form of resistance. Moreover, Fatima and Nina shared their developed visionary positioning for themselves with their peers in the hopes that they, too, would build their self-efficacy for altering their inequitable schooling conditions, which demonstrates a true enactment of visionary leadership.

Amirah and Dina connected wanting change and being capable of making it happen to their organizer identities and communities. At the end of an interview with Amirah, I asked them what they wanted the larger public to know about their work and they said, "I am a human being and I- I love my city, and I love my people … and I will fight for my people and for my city." Here, Amirah clearly understood their capacity to produce more justice in Detroit. Connectedly, Dina talked about how she was strategic in joining the collective because she "always wanted … to make a change" and represent her Yemeni Muslim community. She spoke about how the YOC's large reach of different youth across Detroit influenced her and that she "… wanted to be part of something bigger." Dina expressed that she felt she could advance her organizing best by representing her home organization, HOPE. While HOPE mainly represented Arab Americans in Detroit and Dearborn, the organization had been actively trying to diversify to reach more people outside of their ethnic-racial community. Due to HOPE predominantly representing Arab American communities and Yemeni-Muslim areas in Detroit, Dina associated being "a part of something bigger" with being the representative of her organization to the larger YOC because of the YOC's reach and connections with other communities. Together, Amirah and Dina's positionings align with the resistance element of my conceptual framework that operates as a "… natural force of survivance" (Vizenor, 2014, p. 116). In this survivance, Amirah and Dina speak to a critical element of resistance: They believe that they have the power to make change happen even within a society and schooling experience that thwarts such beliefs. Their resistance is

evident in the ways they so powerfully enmeshed themselves in the fight for social justice as youth. Indeed, they sought to create change on the terms that they set for themselves in concert with the communities they represented.

For Brandi, a Black youth organizer from Detroit, change was something she felt she *needed* to be a part of and facilitate. Throughout her interview, she envisioned change happening in Detroit due to her and the YOC's collective efforts. In Brandi's first interview, she shared that because of her activism within the YOC, she was influenced to become the U.S. Secretary of Education in her future career. She spoke to utilizing the information she learned while in the YOC and Detroit Vitality to inform the work she would eventually do as the Secretary of Education. I asked her what information she would uplift, and she stated,

> … how schools in certain neighborhoods don't get the same education opportunities as other schools in other neighborhoods. I think quality education, it's a necessity, not a luxury. And I feel like they've [mostly white people in power] been treating it as luxury for all these years, for centuries. You know? So, I feel like I gotta be the one to change that.

Like Amirah and Dina, Brandi elucidates key aspects of resistance theory where she (a) analyzed the status of education within Detroit's communities of color, (b) connected educational inequity to the white supremacist logics curation of education as luxury, and (c) resistively wanted to be a part of making *quality* education a right for all.

For all the youth organizers represented throughout this section, they firstly asserted who they were as changemakers individually. I extend that as they positioned themselves to be changemakers, they also espoused visionary leadership due to their love for their communities and their desire to represent them. As a part of being a visionary for oneself, they then shared this

same desire for their peers because they saw the power it could produce as illustrated through the sentiments shared by Nina and Fatima. What is key here is the youth's identification as visionaries for self. However, as presented in the next section, over time they each spoke to how they grew into a visionary collective for Detroit, their neighborhoods, and the YOC.

Being a Visionary Collective: "I Have to Continue Fighting for Myself and Fighting for Other People"

In the 1960s, the U.S. farmworkers movement was a part of a nationwide call for farmworkers' rights and direct action to adequately pay those who worked in the fields, starting in California (Pasion, 2020). Through organizing leadership from Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, thousands of farmers secured more rights and a living wage. One aspect of the movement and the work of the organizers was to create relationships and build broad-based coalitions to strengthen their people power. A part of this relationship-building and people power was represented through the famous "unity clap." Filipino and Mexican immigrant communities would come together after a long day on the field and end by engaging in powerful, community-built, applause and affirmation. This clap represented their multiracial-multiethnic coalition across difference and language barriers and showed how they were all connected in their activism. Filipino community members taught the phrase *isang bagsak*—which meant "one down" in Tagalog, to further show the intersections of both oppression and power that people of color could combat and share. Activists would clap in unison, end on one final clap together, and yell "ISANG BAGASAK!" As a part of the UC Berkeley multicultural coalition I was in from 2011 to 2013, we would end our protests, rallies, or large meetings with this phrase as well. In our teachings to one another, we learned to define the phrase as "one down, one fall." We understood that our work and liberation was tied together, which is similar to how the Detroit

YOC tied organizing to their families, communities, peers, and one another. Together, these youth mentioned how they understood and described their organizer identities via affirming a visionary collective for themselves and their Detroit community.

Isang Bagsak signifies community and that what affects someone within your community or coalition affects the whole. As a part of understanding and describing their organizer identities, the youth tied their activism to their dreams for future generations and often explicitly noted that they did this work for themselves, their siblings, and the "next generation." In this section that further pinpoints the collective visioning finding, I uplift how the young people, united, spoke of a collective vision of change for their families and future youth. This desire for change on behalf of the youths' families was discussed at one of their key organizing retreats in January 2020. Since 2016, the YOC hosts a Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day retreat each January over the holiday weekend to plan the actions of their organizing issue for the year. Over time, the retreat came to represent bonding moments to build greater connectivity within the collective (Bautista, 2018) and a recruitment opportunity for newly interested youth. As a part of their relationship-building exercises, the youth utilized the MLK Day retreat to learn more about one another's reasoning for being an organizer. At the 2020 retreat, youth and adult allies all gathered in a circle and asked one another their reason for organizing. Given the focus of this dissertation, I paid particular attention to the youth's responses and listened as each young person recounted their "why." Youth affirmed what was being said by looking at one another, nodding their heads, and snapping their fingers. Additionally, youths' explanation of their "why" was important as it served a dual purpose for learning about one another and seeing their connections for justice. Connectedly, in a co-chair meeting, Xiomara was explicit about how youth in the collective needed to share the same "beliefs" and ask "deep questions" to "see what

their mindset is about" (Fieldnote, May 22, 2020). Although Xiomara shared this need for their summer institute in July 2020 (a recruitment opportunity for more youth organizers), her desire was also part and parcel of the MLK retreat because new youth could join the YOC. The mindset that Xiomara referenced articulates as a full-circle vision that demonstrates how critical shared beliefs were from one recruitment opportunity to the next. In this way, sharing their dreams, desires, and learning of one another were part of their collective visioning process and an opportunity to create synergistic meanings of justice.

In the specifics of youth offering their "why," I observed how several of the youth talked about wanting a quality education for their siblings. For instance, Fatima said, "I want things to be better for my siblings." Xiomara and another Latinx boy (not a part of this study) held similar sentiments and specifically spoke about wanting their younger siblings to have access to a better education. On their own accord, the youth in the collective shared a visioning for their families, and in these instances their siblings, to experience an education that they have all dreamed of. In these accounts, youth of color demonstrated a deep care for their siblings' futures that further fueled their resistance as youth organizers (Fine et al., 2014).

In another data setting, Latinx youth Joe also spoke to how his work was directly connected to representing his family. He stated,

> when coming to the collective I usually don't represent myself fully because usually I think about my, my sister and my cousins … and [how] the actions that we plan out are going to be impacting them the most since we're mostly working in the education field.

Some of the actions Joe participated in included attending lobby days in Lansing, MI to advocate for more resources in Detroit and the immigration rally for undocumented communities' rights in the summer of 2019. Through his advocacy, Joe, in centering his family, unraveled a collective

vision that directed his organizing as it was informed by its potential impact on his younger family members due to the organizing of the YOC. Xiomara also explicitly talked about her love for her siblings and how they inspired her to organize. She connected her childhood to her organizing and how the work she did was mainly for her siblings. With some light giggles, but also in seriousness, Xiomara offered,

> … for me personally, um, growing up in not the best of a household, my main motivation in life overall, like not just because of my work, would have to be my siblings. Um, like I will do anything for my siblings in a heartbeat. And, I know personally, it fuels my work because I don't want them to go through everything that I went through.

In her interviews, Xiomara shared her transition out of Detroit schools as an elementary student into a neighboring suburb where she encountered racism from her white peers. She would recount moments of feeling isolated and silenced due to her encounters with white students in high school, in addition to navigating similar feelings from her family, which were some of the experiences she did not want her siblings to endure. Jointly, for Joe and Xiomara, this desire to make change for others outside of themselves was shown to be a connector among the youth and a part of their collective visioning.

Other youth organizers shared that they understood that their activism was a part of a lineage wherein one must pick up the mantle when it is their generation's turn. In Sky's interview, she discussed the desire to improve future generations' educational experiences. As a young Black girl in Detroit, Sky enthusiastically talked about how she never had excitement coming home from school to tell her Mom what she learned because she did not think she learned much in her schools. Yet, although she herself never had this positive experience due to lack of teachers, over-policing, and under-resourced schools, she made it clear that she wanted

future youth to have positive schooling experiences in Detroit. In her interview she went onto say,

> … I've never really been able to come home and be like, "Mama this and this and that" [different things she learned at school]. But I always come home, and be like, "I got in a fight" or "this person did this", or "the security pushed me down and I hurt my head" and stuff like that. I ain't never had that chance, and I want other people, the next generation, to be able to have that experience.

Sky shared a very vulnerable experience and articulated that although she was harmed in her schooling experiences, she organized so that others would not. In Sky's accounts, she exemplified being a visionary for the collective that was selflessly rooted in why she organized, who she did it for, and her dreams for the next generation.

Agreeably, Brandi imparted that her efforts were to offset what future generations would have to go through. In a discussion of what she would offer as advice to future activists, she said she wanted them to know about some of the negative mental health effects from organizing (Ballard & Ozer, 2016) and that "it's okay to not be okay." Brandi also spoke about the normalcy of being emotional in organizing because of the immense amount of labor it can require and offered, "it's gon' be emotional, cause it's like…why am I, why am I going through this, why is this happening and like, that feeling is okay because that should push you to work more, so the future generation wouldn't have to think like that." For Brandi's organizing pursuits, she encouraged future organizers to utilize the undermining health consequences from the demands of youth activism as motivation to eradicate oppression and to alleviate the following generations' organizing work. In an interview with Amirah, they noted how they have benefitted from the activism of others and they therefore wanted others to benefit from their work too. In a

sense, Amirah was expressing a "pay it forward" mantra and understood that as long as injustice existed, so would the work of activists. They argued, "systematic oppression will always exist and always need fighting for as long as it exists. People have fought for me in the past. I've fought for myself. I have to continue fighting for myself and fighting for other people." Sky, Brandi, and Amirah all included others in their desires for organizing and, more specifically, discussed a collective vision wherein they kept their freedom dreams for future generations at the center.

As highlighted throughout this section, the youth saw their work as a part of a larger mission of keeping others from suffering, despite having suffered themselves in their education system. They tied their educational justice organizing to the future educational opportunities of their community and lived into the mantra of "one down, one fall" or *isang bagsak* grounded in their organizer identities and visionary leadership. Distinctly, youth were representative of how "identities are relational, dynamic, and performed representations" (Rosario-Ramos, Tucker-Raymond, & Rosario 2017, p. 220). For example, in establishing a collective organizer identity in the YOC, they developed relational understandings of why they engaged in educational justice organizing to develop a collective vision for the YOC and Detroit youth; further harnessing and building greater people power. In youths' visionary leadership they exuded a deep empathy, which Goleman et al. (2002) argued as most important in this enactment. They stated, "… the ability to sense how others feel and to understand their perspectives means that a leader can articulate a truly inspirational vision" (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 56). In youth's dedication to changing the educational future of their peers, they also empathized with the educational experiences of their families and peers—with connections to their own schooling trajectories—and articulated a collective vision of educational justice for everyone. In these ways, youth as a

part of their coalition, engaged in creating collective visions with one another to ground their organizing, build shared values, and construct advocacy efforts that would bring their collective visioning to fruition. Pointedly, they became a visionary collective as a result of these intersecting processes and co-constructing a collective self-awareness (i.e., their goal settings facilitation)—the second tenet of SJYD.

Informing and Advancing Youth of Color's Coalition Building Through Communal Reflexive Praxis

Below, I provide a vignette that illustrates how the youth organizers engaged in communal reflexive praxis to select their campaign issue for 2020. Communal reflexive praxis is the second fluid principle I name to suggest how the youth organized with one another in their multiracial-multiethnic educational justice coalition. Youth organizers' communal reflexive praxis involved them (a) assessing their personal experiences, (b) bridging shared struggles and understandings with their peers in the YOC, and (c) connecting with peers outside of the YOC in ways that influenced their organizing agenda and tactics to ensure they were representative of Detroit students' needs. Altogether, communal reflexive praxis is rooted in peer learning. Following this vignette, I further highlight how youth honed in on their intra-peer learning from their ethnic-racial vantage points and then close this section with the ways the YOC utilized their learnings from peers across the city in their organizing work. These learnings and engagement help answer my research questions two and four about how youths' coalition building is informed and advanced, and how the YOC influenced their meaning making of resistance, critical consciousness, and activism.

Employing Communal Reflexive Praxis in the Youth Organizing Collective

After the MLK retreat in January 2020, the youth left with their top two priorities: getting police out of schools and acquiring a student seat on the school board. The Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) has over 98% students of color and is one of the only districts in the state to have a dedicated police department. Students and organizers alike have pointed out the racial overtones of having a fully funded police department for DPSCD when students were lacking books, adequately sized classrooms, full-time teachers, and satisfactory school buildings. In the work of the CBO and YOC, youth organizers dedicated an immense amount of effort to learning about the policing statistics within DPSCD. They found that in 2019, DPSCD spent $15.9 million on police and security, but in 2015, spent only $992,000 on social workers. Youth often leveraged this statistic to speak to the ways that districts like DPSCD would rather police their students than invest in students' mental health and safety (Whitaker, Torres-Guillén, Morton, Jordan, Coyle, Mann & Sun, 2019). Statistics such as these were a core argument in their desires for defunding police and a key reason why they wanted a student seat on the school board to better highlight these issues.

On February 19th, 2020, youth organizers and adult allies came into the YOC meeting space ready to make a collective decision on the final campaign issue for the year, not realizing it would be one of the last times we would meet in person prior to the global pandemic. In this in-person meeting, we did our usual routine of ensuring all could be seen by making our table into a U-shape. Little by little, youth and their adult allies trickled into the space gearing up to organize with one another. Per usual, at the beginning of the meeting, the co-chairs started with announcements and then allowed me to remind the collective of bringing back permission forms for my dissertation study. The co-chairs continued with updates, an icebreaker, and then broke the other youth into groups to discuss the top two campaign issues. These tactics were a part of

how the YOC generated a routine with one another and served a measure of accountability. Over time, youth learned the format for each meeting and knew where they could add in, pushback, or share. These routines provided avenues for the young people to choose when they would engage the most and allowed them to share their input. Notably, what can be understood as small actions in the YOC, such as creating U-shape tables at each meeting, were in fact a part of a larger ethos of collectivity wherein all could feel listened to and all were primed to be the focal point if engaging in vulnerability or sharing an idea with the group.

To make a collective decision between the two priorities of defunding the police and a student seat on the school board, the co-chairs strategized to condense the large group of youth. To make sure the young people (a) got to meet one another, (b) moved beyond their partner organizations, and (c) separated from the youth they knew more intimately, the co-chairs had all of us (youth and adult allies) count off into smaller breakout groups with a predetermined number of people. Youth developed this tactic to diversify small-group membership based on their experience that sometimes young people would gravitate towards being around the same people. In this meeting, we got into our smaller groups and were assigned our chart papers that were stuck around our meeting space. In our groups, we were charged with mapping out the pros and cons of each campaign on our papers. Some pros of "reducing police in schools" were the pros of "students will feel safer at schools sooner" and the idea that if police were out of schools, it would allow school budgets to allocate more funding towards other needs. Some cons for less police were that "schools would feel *less* safe" and that it would be "time consuming" (Fieldnotes, February 19, 2020). Pros for "students have a say in the budget" (this was used interchangeably with the student school board seat) were "we would have the things we need" and "students would have a say and their voice would be heard, which could bring more students

back to DPSCD" (Fieldnotes, February 19, 2020). The youth circled around the room to review each statement and used written checkmarks and comments to either offer support for what was written on the charts or share a pushback for what they did not agree with, thus further garnering collective decision-making, which was an output of their communal reflexive praxis. The tactics of group breakouts and sharing ideas in small groups was the first step of communal reflexive praxis. Youth went to their groups and engaged in peer learning about the different pros and cons of their campaign choices before they came back to a larger group to make a collective decision. I argue that engaging in peer learning was critical in enacting communal reflexive praxis so that first, youth could assess their personal experiences and ideas about how they individually felt about the campaign issues in connection with other members of the collective, then engage with their small group, and finally write their final thoughts on the chart paper as a group—one of the beginning steps in how the YOC engaged in communal reflexive praxis internally.

The co-chairs selected groups to share their pros and cons from their corners of the room. Youth listened, defended their opinions, and through asking more questions to one another, developed a deeper understanding on what each group was proposing for the selection of the campaign. An Arab American youth organizer in the space offered that a school board seat would allow them to have a say in the budget *and* the ability to advocate for the Detroit district to eliminate school police, which served as an actual bridge of shared struggles, and thus, made it a win-win as both major issues would be achieved. Here, this insight from one of the Arab American youth in the space influenced other youth to reflect more about how their decisions for the campaign could have a broader impact if they proposed, and therefore, were more communally reflexive about addressing their organizing priorities by pursuing the school board seat. Collectively, the YOC chose the broader issue of securing a student seat to open more

pathways for centering student voice and decision-making. These decision-making strategies were key components of how the youth solicited their peers' voices to select their campaign issues. The illustrative case above highlights how youth engaged in communal reflexive praxis, such as the Arab American youth who understood that both options for the youth campaign was of importance to their peers, and therefore provided a campaign solution where all could see themselves represented. Peer learning was the conduit for how youth engaged in communal reflexive praxis to situate their ideas with one another, developed a shared understanding to move their campaign forward, and centered their own voices to make a collective decision. Youth organizers also created spaces where they were the primary concern, built more power among one another, and collectively made impactful decisions (Akom et al., 2008; Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Lewis-Charp et al., 2006).

Cross-Cultural Peer Learning within the Youth Organizing Collective

As a part of the YOC's peer learning, the organizers often engaged one another in their different ethnic-racial vantage points, which influenced the meaning making of their resistance, critical consciousness, and activism as a collective. Black and Latinx youth in this study often pointed to how they learned the most from the Arab American youth about their community dynamics and overall culture because they had the fewest interactions with individuals from Arab American communities. As youth who were in the Arabic community, Dina and Zara represented their partner organization, HOPE, which was predominantly Arab American and, more specifically, Yemeni-Muslim. Dina and Zara also attended the same charter school that had mostly Yemeni-Muslim students and was ran by majority Lebanese administrators. These demographics proved to be important aspects of their educational experiences as Dina and Zara would often share personal experiences in the YOC about the discrimination they experienced

because of the ethnic culture clashes at their school. As an example, Dina discussed the distinct differences between her culture and its intersections within her charter school experiences in comparison to the other youth in the collective. In her experience with her charter school administrators she said,

> … they [school administrators of her charter school] would, like, blame a lot of the students for things and threaten us with our parents, and you know, we all come from traditional … not all, but, you know, a lot … most of us come from traditional Yemeni households and they would really reinforce their traditional values over basically education.

Dina educated her peers on how her Yemeni culture intersected with her lack of educational opportunity. She explained that because her charter school was rooted in Arabic culture, it made her schooling and racial-ethnic culture at constant crossroads. By sharing her experiences within her unique charter school in Detroit, youth learned more about Dina's experiences, which extended their social and global awareness and their empathy of her. Her sharing also provided an avenue for youth to engage in communal reflexive praxis with her to be more inclusive in their organizing.

Specifically, Fatima and Sky shared in their interviews about learning more from their Arab American peers, which influenced their activism. As a Latinx youth, Fatima reflected on how she learned from the Arab American youth in the YOC that they only had one school option (the charter school mentioned above) because it was the only one their families trusted. Fatima then shared with me,

> So you know, it's good to receive a perspective from them [her Arab American peers] because if we're like, "Oh, if it's such a bad school, why don't you leave?" Because they really can't and you know, it really opens up your eyes.

Similarly, Sky spoke to this same lesson from the Arab American youth and how it influenced her understanding of organizing across their different racial and ethnic identities. After learning about the school that most of her Arab American peers attended, Sky talked about how she saw they went through similar issues, but that it was also different. She then bridged their shared struggles in noticing that they all have to confront the educational inequality within the city and that "… we all go through the same thing, it's not just us [referencing her Black/African American community]." Further, she stated "… if we work together we can fight for a change for each one of our schools …" Fatima and Sky both showcased aspects of communal reflexive praxis in how they connected how their Arab American peers experienced a specific kind of discrimination and intra-ethnic conflicts, which broadened their relational race understandings. Furthermore, Fatima and Sky then utilized this reflexivity in how they approached their organizing and understanding of the needs of the Arab American youth, thus building greater people power and advancing their meaning making of their resistance, critical consciousness, and activism. Additionally, without the teaching of the Arab American youth in the YOC, the other young people—like Fatima and Sky—would not have been able to develop such reflexivity as it related to different Arab American needs. Here, youths' critical lenses and praxis serve as another signal to how they were able to advance their coalition building and further develop personally and politically by illuminating both their differences and sameness in their organizing efforts (Brown, 2017; Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Dzurinko, et al., 2011; Kirshner, 2015).

From Zara's ethnic-racial background, she provided an example of how she taught others in the collective about her Palestinian community's struggles. She shared,

> I've taught actually a lot of people, like, for other Detroit Vitality youth, what's going on in Israel and Palestine and what the US has to do with this and that they were totally unaware of. And it's just, like, spreading that awareness and telling people what's going on like really gave me power. Like … it empowered me and just saying like, "This is my struggle daily. This is why I struggle as a Palestinian."

Similar to Dina's peer teaching about the specific Yemeni perspective, Zara provided an example of how she taught the other youth in the YOC about her Palestinian community's struggles and called for her peers to be reflexive with her about her particular ethnic-racial experiences. Together, Zara and her peers employed communal reflexive praxis. Moreover, Zara further made meaning of her critical consciousness and activism by teaching her peers about her culture and the different political issues her community had to navigate. She reflected on how sharing about the occupation of Palestine by Israel (Hill & Plitnick, 2021) empowered her and, I argue, allowed her to influence the youths' global awareness. Notably, the repression of Palestine on behalf of Israeli forces is an important topic not only because of Zara's ethnic-racial identity, but also because the unjust treatment of Palestinians has implications for how coalitions understand and are influenced by the realities of our global communities in the fight for freedom and liberation (Hill & Plitnick, 2021). The US complicity, President Trump's unwavering support for the occupation of Palestine through his defunding of needed Palestinian programs during his presidency, and an eradication of their rights by Israeli forces, create a reality that warrants further speculation in how our diverse communities throughout the US are impacted by such international relations (Hill & Plitnick, 2021).

Alternatively, Joe discussed how he was not as socially aware prior to the YOC. He shared with me how he held biases about the Black community because of what his family would say or taught him. He said it was not until the collective that he learned about "other races", which in turn, increased his efficacy for organizing and positioned him to be more communally reflexive. He stated,

> … before I joined the YOC at Detroit Vitality, um, I did not know about any other races that much outside of what was taught in school. And we know that most of the stuff taught in the DPS [Detroit Public School] system is not very trustworthy. And so, getting that firsthand knowledge and just being able to just correct those misperceptions about other races and just being able to learn their traditions and cultures while also expanding the history of your own is a bit enlightening to me because ... before high school I would not even think about it that much. I would just often go with what was being taught and what my parents would often tell me from the news or from their experiences.

Joe learned biases about other cultures from his parents and school, but the YOC allowed him to unlearn those biases and broaden his understandings of other people. He discussed how learning from his peers and being around them not only made him closer to them, but also influenced his organizing and critical consciousness. In particular, Joe came to resist the anti-Blackness he learned. He assessed and critiqued his previous anti-Black beliefs, enacted elements of thick solidarity, and embraced a mobilization of empathy that Liu & Shange (2018) importantly posit as necessary for the work of cross-racial coalition building. Through this learning and exposure, Joe was able to further develop a self-awareness about what he had learned about other ethnic-racial groups, be reflexive about why he believed those things, and then challenge himself to grow personally and socio-politically.

Furthermore, this influence of other cultures has been found to be an important aspect of critical multicultural organizing and youth development overall. Young people who are involved in these ways often develop a greater worldview, which allows them to be more inclusive in their justice efforts, and are more positively developed (Carey et al., 2020; Christens & Dolan, 2011; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2012). Together, the youth in this section highlighted the synergistic development of their racialized meanings from a relational approach wherein racial categories are "… coproduced and coconstitutive, and always dependent on constructions of gender, sexuality, labor, and citizenship" (Molina, HoSang, & Guiterrez, 2019, p. 3). Through peer learning within communal reflexive praxis development, young people analyzed their previous understandings of ethnic-racial identities and stereotypes, bridged differences (Watkins et al., 2007), and shifted their mindsets and organizing.

Peer Learning Outside the Youth Organizing Collective

Learning about the necessities of other young people outside of the YOC was important to the youth organizers in this study. From this acquired knowledge of their peers, youth organizers were compelled to engage in the reflexive practices of assessing shared personal experiences, bridging these shared experiences into concerted issues, and connecting this assessment and bridge into their advocacy of their peers outside the YOC to advance their organizing and thus, coalition building. As an example, in Brandi's interview she explained how one of the goals of the YOC was to garner more youth input from her peers in Detroit, which allowed the YOC to leverage their peers' voices and embed them within their organizing and recruitment of more young people. In this, Brandi listed the goals as:

> To get young people involved in activism so they can broaden our horizon to let us know what's really going on for real … And I think that's the main goal of the youth collective

> so young people can have a voice, young people … can know what's going on in our schools and realize, like "dang, how can I change this if it was my school?"

Brandi illuminated how the youth collective taught them to be informed by "what's really going on for real" from the vantage points of youth in the YOC and their peers. Importantly, Brandi speaks to how other youth activists in the YOC "broadened their horizons" by learning from their peers about what was happening in schools across Detroit. The YOC then leveraged this knowledge from greater youth in the city to inform their advocacy for Detroit students. Brandi's illumination of how their peers throughout Detroit informed the YOC's organizing is a key aspect of their communal reflexive praxis. In this praxis, the YOC incorporated youth's experiences, engaged with what they learned from their peers, and then embedded their peer learnings into their organizing—all of which was a reflexive process.

Joe provides further information about how youth organizers engaged with their peers to continually be reflexive in their organizing to assess power relations within the schooling experiences shared with them and evaluate the YOC's organizing to make sure it was encompassing of their peers' inputs (Carrillo, 2014; Stovall, 2014). In the process of garnering such important information from their peers Joe explained,

> … there's a whole bunch of...research and listening to the communities, and work. It's not solely focused on us (youth organizers), it's connected to us, but it's focused on finding the commonality between everyone so that no one feels left out on certain things because even if one person has an issue with something, another person may somehow be connected with the after effects of that issue.

In Joe's assessment of the process of organizing, he highlighted the reflexive praxis the YOC engaged in to make sure their campaigns were inclusive of issues deemed by the community.

They learned from their peers about what was affecting them in schools, reflected with one another in the YOC to discover linkages, and leveraged these connections to advance their coalition building and campaigns. Together, Brandi and Joe spoke to their listening processes where they learned from their peers' diverse schooling experiences to inform their organizing. I argue these are intricate skills that required youth to (a) continually assess the synergies between what the youth organizers themselves wanted to put forth and what their peers wanted, (b) combine their wants with what they learned from their peers, and (c) seek to advance that curated collective issue—an impactful utilization of communal reflexive praxis.

Significantly, Dina provides important nuance to their reflexive praxis in that the YOC had to be critical about what they incorporated in their campaigns from peers. In Dina's description of a dream district, she spoke of a district where student voice was an action item for administrators. She illustrated,

> … where like student voice is really recognized and not just like, "Oh, we care about your voice, and do this survey" Right? … like, they actually implement change based on what is necessary and also what the students want. But, I'd emphasize what is necessary because what the students want isn't always the best thing.

Like for everyone, and especially in organizing, not everything one wants is what is best for the collective. Distinctly, Dina's dreams of actualized student voice recognition demonstrate the fluidity of collective visioning and communal reflexive praxis. Her collective vision of students as partners in schooling decisions supported her communal reflexive praxis in advocating for this implementation with critical assessment of students' wants. Jointly, the YOC enacted discernment, such as Brandi's analysis of how peers "broadened their horizons," Joe's practice

of "finding the commonalities," and Dina's assessment of "what is necessary," which all came together in the YOC—a communal reflexive praxis.

Complementarily, Fatima's analysis of the power of collective voice in their campaigns brings it home to the YOC's communal reflexive praxis. To this, she articulated,

> … sometimes they [people in power] act like we're just like some little pests or like a little gnat just flying around or a fly in the middle of night going like, "Buzz, buzz." Like … we have a valid voice and we're speaking for the people that don't usually speak up. So it's not just us. Like it's everyone that it affects. And that's a lot of people, so they should stop acting like it, like they're the big boss around here because they're really not. It's, it's us.

Fatima provided a critical assessment of how when the YOC engages in the practices of peer learning—both within the YOC and outside the YOC—they become a representative power in their organizing. In this collective power, as Joe argued, "it's not solely focused on us [youth in the YOC]" and thus their organizing collective is really, as Fatima so proudly claimed, "everyone that it affects and that's a lot of people."

Altogether, when youth engage in peer learning they are also pushed to be reflexive in the YOC so they can ensure their organizing is representative and impactful for the greater community of Detroit and thus, employ communal reflexive praxis. Additionally, they exerted their voice in their peer learning via facilitating workshops like Brandi spoke of and having had "opportunities and platforms that they can make a change with" that Zara uplifted. So, while peer learning was the focus of this finding, youths' knowledge development among one another would not have been possible if the young people did not also leverage their voice by expressing their opinions, engaging in dialogue, and learning to see they had the "power to speak up", as Xiomara mentioned after speaking at a protest. This employment, and process outlined

throughout this section, speaks to how through peer learning, assessment of personal experiences, bridging of shared struggles, connection to peers outside the YOC, and exerting their voices, youth became more knowledgeable holistically which influenced their meaning making of resistance, critical consciousness, and activism. In leveraging these learnings in their organizing, youth organizers' coalition building and relational understandings of race were informed and advanced.

The next major finding revealed that youth's relationship-building was foundational to their coalition building—which I offer as the third fluid principle of holistic striving. I argue that the holistic striving within the YOC's coalition building is an exemplar of humanizing processes and offers important nuance of how Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth navigated their various ethnic-racial intersections and tensions by nurturing familial relationships within the YOC.

Coalition Building as a Curation of Family: Holistic Striving within the Youth Organizing Collective

In these last findings of Chapter 4, I marshal the data from the youth to show how they utilized the principle of holistic striving to enhance their coalition building and organizing. I ground holistic striving in the emotive aspects of the YOC and define it as encompassing young people's relationship-building, recognition of each other as whole beings given their social and cultural identities, and their utilization of humanizing processes to continually be inclusive of one another. Striving is also important here because youth and adult allies worked to not only center youth voice and youth decision making, but they also were committed to creating an environment where youth could enact their citizenship on their terms, share vulnerabilities, and assume leadership over the coalition. In exemplifying holistic striving, I first present data that

encapsulates its processes. As an additive part of holistic striving, I highlight how the family-like atmosphere within the YOC was a prominent feature of the collective. Altogether, this finding helps answer research questions two and three about how the multiracial-multiethnic demographic make-up of the collective informed and advanced youths' coalition building and how they understood and navigated racial-ethnic intersections and tensions. As an introduction to the enactment of holistic striving, I offer a brief vignette of YOC co-chairs Dina and Xiomara.

Two Youth Co-Chairs' Leadership as a Model of Holistic Striving

A thorough understanding of holistic striving was illustrated during a YOC co-chair meeting with Dina and Xiomara in June 2020. At this time, the YOC was preparing for another launch of listening sessions with young people across Detroit to learn what youth wanted in their schools post COVID-19. Xiomara and Dina led this meeting together because Brandi was not available for the week of meetings with the YOC. As the girls approached the meeting, they first mapped out the agenda with one another that consisted of five categories: (a) norms, announcements, and purpose; (b) icebreaker; (c) task associated with purpose; (d) the occasional political education workshop; and (e) the closeout and checkout. In their agenda setting, Dina and Xiomara constructed announcements of recent events that included the updates on the case of Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was killed by police officers in March 2020 during a "no-knock" raid on her apartment while she slept (Oppel, Taylor, & Bogel-Burroughs, 2021). They also added (a) the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) win that caused much excitement for Xiomara and her peers who supported her; (b) the victory of the LGBTQ Supreme Court case where the court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protected LGBTQ employees from discrimination (Totenberg, 2020); and (c) the youth-led protest against President Trump using the social media tool TikTok to masquerade as rally attendants by securing

hundreds of thousands of tickets and then not attend the rally, which resulted in fewer than 7,000 attendees actually appearing (Lorenz, Browning, & Frenkel, 2020). Sharing these announcements represented how youth members, in this case Dina and Xiomara, sought to provide updates and news to the YOC that spanned from Black Lives Matter with Breonna Taylor, to LGBTQ rights, to youths' national protests.

Dina and Xiomara also came in with questions about how the focus groups and surveys, as a part of the listening sessions, were going to be conducted. They wanted to know how best to get representation from across the city and Dina expressed worry of getting a lot of feedback from particular neighborhoods in Detroit. Here, Dina demonstrated a key aspect of holistic striving by seeking to collaborate more thoroughly with youth across the city from her vantage point of being a youth herself. She understood that there was a core group of youth members who resided in southwest or the eastside of Detroit and she wanted to ensure that other youth voices could be garnered from other neighborhoods.

In true Xiomara style, as I observed over time, she looked out for the underdog—in this case the young people who required more direction—and advocated for deeper clarity on the approaches in the listening sessions. For instance, she questioned adult ally and Detroit Vitality director, Tera, on how many focus groups were going to be complemented with the surveys and asked, "How are we going to make the focus group numbers realistic?" With their researcher lenses, both Xiomara and Dina leveraged one another's assessments to get a better grasp on how many youth could be within one focus group. Xiomara highlighted that larger focus groups prevented a lot of youth from speaking and would be dominated by the most vocal and said, "a lot of people won't talk." Dina supported Xiomara, referred to past larger focus group experiences and said "that's how most of the dialogue was created" from their past sessions

(Fieldnote, June 23, 2020). To mitigate this, Xiomara and Dina planned to propose smaller focus groups to the YOC at their meeting the next day. Dina closed out the meeting by articulating that "as a HOPE member", the surveys and focus groups needed to be connected to a larger understanding of the YOC's goals so youth could better understand what they were being tasked to do in their home organizations. Together, they utilized the developed knowledge of their peers over time to foreground their decisions on what to present to the YOC and centered their peers in defining the YOC's goals, which was only possible because of the sustained relationships and rapport.

In the brief vignette above, Xiomara and Dina leveraged their historical memories of what was successful in their past campaign work, the understanding of their peers in the YOC, their own sensibilities as young people and brought these connections to their listening sessions to build power with youth across Detroit. Dina understood the importance of more diverse youth representation in their surveys and focus groups so they could more holistically advocate for the youth in Detroit after the pandemic. Xiomara utilized her past experiences of feeling lost within the YOC, as she had discussed in past instances where she was confused by the campaign plans and sought clarity about their goals proactively. Dina and Xiomara worked to be accountable to their youth counterparts by understanding the varying issues they were trying to meet and sought to provide realistic goals for the YOC—a humanizing process they engaged in together as co-chairs. Ultimately, Xiomara and Dina, in their roles as co-chairs, advocated for more voice and representation in their campaign work—an important element to holistic striving. Here, resistance is in the minutia and arguably most critical. Instead of going with what tasks were given to them by adult allies (i.e., the size of focus groups and the communication of the campaign to the YOC), the co-chairs continued to center themselves and peers to better delineate

a plan that worked for everyone and clarified for attainable goals. The vignette above also related to the co-chairs enactment of humanizing processes where together they assessed the YOC agenda to ensure they (a) shared news about the latest activism and wins, (b) established realistic goals and greater youth representation, (c) centered best practices, and (d) communicated alignment between organizing tactics (i.e., listening sessions) and the larger campaign goal (i.e., garnering greater youth voice to inform their advocacy for Detroit youth's quality virtual schooling). These processes were also replicated in the YOC as other youth organizers participated in the same procedures within the collective, such as when youth engaged in communally reflexive decision-making processes to select their campaign issue for the year.

Processes of Holistic Striving: Youths' Recognition and Navigation of the Intersectional Identities in the Youth Organizing Collective

In this section, I situate the youths' assessments of and reflections on how they saw one another as alike and different given their various backgrounds. I marshal the youth's narratives to uplift how the youth organizers' intersectional identities allowed them to more holistically strive for diverse thought and ideas in the YOC. This particular section is important as it illuminates how the young people came to the YOC organizing space from different, intersectional identities beyond their race and ethnicity, such as their gender, citizenship, and religious affinities. As an example, Amirah (personal pronoun "they") discussed the care and recognition of diversity Detroit Vitality exhibited towards its community members. They stated,

> … one thing I've noticed is that, um, the collective, I think the organization as a whole just really like cares about people as people … and it's important in the work that we do to recognize that like we're all like multifaceted people. Like our identities are intersectional

> and that's important in our organizing, but also outside of our organizing, and outside of making change, our identities are still intersectional and we're still multifaceted people.

I highlighted Amirah's noticing because they uplifted their humanity and real lives outside of organizing and how this influenced their connections with each other inside and outside the collective (Crass, 2013; Hogan, 2019). Similarly, Hogan (2019) credited the intersectional work of Black feminists within the 1977 Combahee River Collective in providing important groundwork to intersectional organizing. She spoke to how Black women and women of color had been the bastions of this organizing and asked important questions, such as "How do we not erase each other's identities? How do we not be defensive when people raise issues that are not necessarily directly our own?" (Hogan, 2019, p. 39). Amirah, like the past intersectional work of the Combahee River Collective, spoke to the importance of the holistic view of community member's identities and how these recognitions were integral personally and for coalition building. Additionally, Amirah saw how the YOC represented the world's diversity and said, "seeing the diversity represented in the collective kind of reflects on the diversity represented in the rest of the world." As a non-binary Black youth who had been a part of the YOC since its inception in 2015, Amirah often pushed the collective to think more critically about identity beyond race and ethnicity, such as pushing some of the youth's awareness in pronoun use. As an example, they stated,

> … like being a part of the collective and, for example, asking people to use they/them pronouns in reference to me. Right? Like seeing how people respond to that and like how people challenge themselves to grow and work hard on [laughs] um, using those pronouns and referring to me in the correct way, influences me in return. Like seeing that even though people might not get it at first or might not, uh, get it right away like it's a process.

Amirah reflected on the process of how their peers worked to acknowledge them which, in turn, made Amirah feel more a part of the YOC space. This work, or what Amirah saw as their peers challenging themselves to include the intersectional identities of one another, is the crux of holistic striving. YOC members strove to include all youth members, recognize one another as beings, and advance such inclusion even when they were not always good at it. In this striving, the YOC helped cultivate a humanizing atmosphere where young people were inclined to share more of themselves, be themselves, and offer their opinions more freely (Briscoe, 2012; Oberg De La Garza & Moreno Kuri, 2014).

A key aspect of holistic striving is also how young people developed a space where they could ask questions to better learn about one another, like how Amirah described asking their peers to use they/them pronouns when referring to them. This use of the proper pronouns of all people in the space was also a part of the youth learning to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities in the YOC.

Sky and Nina made connections to how the YOC's diversity allowed them to recognize each other's wholeness, especially when it came to affirming one another's identities and overall experiences as young people in Detroit. In Sky's accounts she found,

> some people have judgmental eye sights. Like, they can judge people on, like, the race they are, the culture they're within, or whether they trans and stuff. And then, with us just being together, hanging out and stuff, I think that turns, like, a blind eye to some people.

Sky used the phrase "blind eye" positively to shed light on the YOC's diverse, accepting, and non-judgmental atmosphere. Instead, the intersectional diversity of the YOC—and their actual inclusion of one another—allowed for them to humanize one another and grow as a coalition. Sky also spoke to how their relationship-building in "just being together" and "hanging out"

provided them with the ability to see one another more fully. Nina expressed similar sentiments of feeling accepted and as though she could be her whole self. I asked her to share her favorite experiences in the YOC and she said, "just being with the people I am within the collective." She went onto say that she did not feel the same level of connectivity in her home organization of Latinidad United but, in the YOC, she was able to get close to other youth quickly such as Sky and Kendra who identified as Black girls. In response to my questioning of why she felt so comfortable at Detroit Vitality she said, "because everyone has their own style at Detroit Vitality, and they accept ... like even if they don't agree with you, they're going to accept you." Similar to Sky, Nina felt like people were not "judging" her in the YOC and that everyone had an open mind. In this way, the YOC's coalition building was advanced because they created a community wherein differently marginalized youth felt at home, safe, and as though they could express themselves, and this allowed them to navigate a wider array of topics and experiences (Carey et al., 2020; Pulido, 2006).

Xiomara discussed feelings of closeness cultivated in their relationship-building but from another vulnerable positionality. As noted throughout this chapter, Xiomara was an undocumented Latinx girl. She often carried this identity with her in the YOC spaces, but also informed the collective that it was fear-inducing to be so open with her status. In our first interview, she remembered when she was going to quit the YOC out of fear of being deported but stayed within the collective because of the relationships and the community she had within the space. She recounted:

> So umm it took a really big part of me when I started being more part of the collective and I started having my name out there. It started to affect me more because it made me scared of my identity, in a way. Like I was scared that if I was such a big leader in the space that

> they would start, like people in power or people that opposed us, would start looking into my name and start realizing that I was undocumented and would try to take matters in their own hands. And that was a really really big step back for me cuz I wanted to stop organizing. At that moment, I didn't wanna do it anymore cuz I was scared somebody was gonna find out my identity and basically take me away. I didn't go to meetings for like a good month or so cuz I was so scared. Like it really did impact me in a really strong way and just having support of the whole collective telling me that "yes, you can do this ... no one's gonna take you away. What you do is good. Like we promise we will do everything in our power not to have you go through that. You're not alone." Like that made me stay and made me, in a way, more passionate about organizing cuz it showed me that "yes, I can do this even if my status isn't where I want it to be, I can still do this with it or without."

Xiomara portrayed a reality that few of her peers experienced and yet, they were able to provide her a comfort and support that mitigated her fear. Importantly, Xiomara also illustrated a beautiful depiction of the larger slogan for undocumented activists as "undocumented, unafraid" in what she articulated above was much more than being unafraid (Seif, 2011; Swerts, 2015). The collective power within the YOC, and the feelings of being cared for and protected, allowed for her passion to organize *even while* holding the emotion of fear. More largely, as a part of sharing her undocumented story within the collective, she is within the larger movement of "storytelling as a social movement practice", which is "… used as a way to incorporate undocumented youth into a community, mobilize support, and legitimize grievances" (Swerts, 2015, p. 346). Additionally, I argue Xiomara's inclusion, along with other differently identified youth, allowed for her peers in the YOC to become co-conspirators (Love, 2019). Love (2019), in her work of abolitionist teaching, argues for the need of co-conspirators wherein allyship is

not the goal. She articulates that co-conspirators "function as a verb" (p. 117) and are in solidarity with the communities they are collaborating with by leveraging their privilege and power towards justice. Similarly, I contend that Xiomara's courageous sharing of her citizenship status and feelings of family in the YOC are examples of how the collective was a space where youth could become co-conspirators and use their co-conspirator lens to advance their coalition building. Yet, this co-conspiration would not have been possible without youth in the YOC creating an atmosphere where youth could come as their whole beings, be acknowledged for their various salient identities, and strive together to include the holistic beings of the young people in the space, such as the young people telling Xiomara "you're not alone." In most moments, they were successful in creating this space of recognition and sometimes they were not as successful, but through it all they kept coming back to try with one another in the YOC.

Navigating Ethnic-Racial Intersections and Tensions within Multiracial-Multiethnic Youth Organizing. Indeed, the YOC provided a great opportunity for young people to learn more intimately about their intersections as similarly, and yet differently, positioned youth of color in Detroit. All of the young people in this study highlighted how they developed a stronger coalition by organizing with one another. This stronger multiracial-multiethnic coalition was also a part of their holistic striving that involved including as many youth as possible within their space, treating one another with respect, and giving credence to one another's salient identities. In accordance with youth's inclusion of one another, Dina, in an interview, talked about how Brandi's curiosity about her Arabic culture made them closer friends. She recounted,

> I was always close with Brandi, um … I think … what got us close was she was asking a lot of questions about my culture. And then she was like, embarrassed by it but I'm like, "No, it's fine!" Like, I love that. You know? I think that's really what got us close. And

then like, I remember her saying, "Oh, like, I guess we're not really different." I'm like "You know, we're not."

For the young people in the YOC, being a part of the multiracial-multiethnic coalition allowed them to learn more about one another's cultures, supported their personal and political development, and increased their empathy of one another. Pointedly, Dina's reflection of her and Brandi's evolving friendship is aligned with the relational race frame of this study. Ferguson (2019) historicizes "… the genealogy of a relational understanding of race came out of the great social movements of anticolonialism and antiracism in the twentieth century. Indeed, the shift toward relations and connectivity represents one of the great epistemic shifts in the politics and study of race" (p. 84). Similarly, through Brandi and Dina's relationality in their organizing collective, they developed a relational understanding of their ethnic-racial backgrounds in how they were "not really different," but also noted and did not gloss over specific aspects of their ethnic-racial cultures.

Additionally, youth would often credit each other for extending their perspectives in ways that strengthened them personally and socio-politically. For instance, Brandi spoke at length about how by being a part of the YOC, she learned the importance of the need to "fight together" and include everyone in her advocacy efforts—a much different position than an earlier time when she was initially reluctant to come to an immigration rally, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Brandi noted her immense growth into intersectional organizing in her explanation of a visceral experience at the summer 2019 immigration rally. Brandi reflected on her emotions at the rally and interwove how it taught her to care about other community's issues. She said,

… while I marched, I'm like thinking like why am I even doing this? Like I shouldn't have to do this, you know what I mean? And it was just like, it was so emotional, and I really, I-

> I didn't even expect myself to get emotional, but I was. I'm like it was crazy, like ... I feel like we are struggling. You know? So it's like I only cared about Black issues, but I didn't think about Latinx issues or like Arab American issues or anything, so it was an eye opener for me, that we are like going through the same stuff and we don't have to look like each other, or be the same gender, race, or whatever to fight together.

Brandi also pointed out how much Detroit Vitality and her rally experience helped her grow and how her relationship with her differently identified peers was a catalyst to wanting to build greater collective power. She went further to say, "I was just caring about Black people and now, it's just like, I care about everybody. Like, it's not just Black, it's Latinx, it's Arab-American, it's everybody that's at the bottom. Everybody that's struggling." So, Brandi, in her organizer trajectory within the diverse YOC, learned that she could hold the duality of wanting specific power and growth for her own Black community while also advocating for other groups' uplift because they were intertwined. Brandi also considered the vantage points of friends and family members as related to other community issues while being in the YOC, an important aspect of relationship-building embedded in the definition of holistic striving. Here, she exuded an "intersectional consciousness" where she was inspired to commit "to multiple subordinate groups" and was anchored "to a more holistic call for social justice and social change" (Terriquez, 2015, p. 348). As a part of learning to holistically strive, Brandi developed a holistic organizing agenda where she included all of her differently identified peers/friends and their salient social justice issues by sharing that she does "care about everybody" and therefore proceeded to consider "everybody that's struggling" in her activism and resistance.

Sky also discussed how she was influenced by the diversity of the collective and how she got to "hear different experiences on how we all can come together despite our differences and

fight for what we all need." She too said she learned new things about the other non-Black cultures and "that is not that much different as much as it's similar." Both of the youth organizers in this section, and in different interviews, talked about how they learned to "come together" through hearing and seeing their different experiences (such as Brandi at the rally) which allowed for deeper relationship-building, a curation of family, and a growth of collective resistance.

In exemplifying the "striving" within this finding, young people also discussed how the YOC could be even more inclusive of their different ethnic-racial identities. Zara, for example, noted how she would have liked to see more Arab American culture represented in the YOC and in the political education. Amirah discussed how "diversity could always be improved upon" which illustrated the need to always "strive" for deeper inclusion. Dina reflected on key moments where Detroit Vitality "missed out on a whole groups' perspective" when they would host their annual spring conference during Ramadan, making it difficult for HOPE members to attend. So, while the YOC was typically good at being a space where all could be seen, sometimes the YOC missed the mark in not accounting for everyone's needs and thus, needed to better incorporate their diverse ethnic-racial members. Together, holistic striving was both a practice and an iterative learning process for the young people and adult allies.

Youths' Nurturing of Family-Like Relationships and Bonds

While youths' holistic striving was important for their coalition building, it was also critically important for youth's development of familial ties to one another. This sub-finding highlights how youth created such family-like connections in the midst of so much chaos with the COVID-19 pandemic; Black Lives Matter movement; and what at the time was the upcoming U.S. presidential election after the "fake news" discourse, xenophobic rhetoric, and alt right

white supremacist support and leadership of the Trump presidency (Harris, Davidson, Fletcher, & Harris, 2017; Love, 2017). Yet, amid such turmoil, young people still cultivated love, care, and generosity in the YOC—an important example of how youth nurtured family-like relationships and bonds within the YOC. Furthermore, this nurturing was an integral aspect of how they built power together due to creating their own networks and gaining access to experiences and people they otherwise would not have had. Connectedly, Dina discussed that what she liked most about being a part of the collective was the "connections, the networks, and the relationships." She saw that through these ties they were able to "have the same resources as other people [i.e., more affluent people]."

Youth continuously referred to one another as a "family" and discussed feeling loved within the YOC. As such, these feelings of family were important to the youth and were displayed in their collective meetings as well. In each meeting, they would have check-ins that were both wellness checks and bonding opportunities. They created icebreakers throughout their meetings, which allowed them to build stronger rapport through asking questions like "which superpower would you have?" and creating a wheel of "get to know you" questions that each youth would answer. This bond was exemplified in a YOC virtual meeting on June 24, 2020. In the YOC updates, Xiomara was excited to talk about the DACA triumph that allowed her to apply for U.S. citizenship. Xiomara exclaimed, "I can officially be on the process for DACA," and when she was giving this update, youth engaged in the chat with congratulations, and Dina was smiling on camera along with her, indicating happiness for her friend and fellow co-chair (Fieldnote, June 24, 2020). It was moments like these that showcased their curated family, which provided the grounding for their multiracial-multiethnic coalition building and further garnered

their collective resistance (i.e., youth in the YOC were happy for Xiomara's pathway to citizenship and overall DACA win).

The familial-like bonds in the YOC were also nuanced in that sometimes young people did not always feel seen in the ways they wanted to be. Kendra, a Black youth organizer, felt the culture of family, but throughout her two years in the YOC, she would often express discontent with what she called "favoritism" of youth leadership. She would often want to be selected to present more or facilitate a meeting; however, the adult allies would select other youth or give her non-substantive roles. One example was when she ran for the co-chair position in the summer of 2019 and was not selected. She talked to me about how she wanted to quit the YOC and when I asked her what changed her mind, this is what she expressed:

> I felt like they didn't need me anymore ... I was just, like, over it. I'm like, "They wouldn't care if I l- if I left the collective" But I seen after I didn't come to one meeting, they all texted me, blew my phone up like, "What are you doing? Where- where are you at? Why didn't you come to the meeting?" So it's like, after that I'm like, "Oh, they care about me," you know?

First, Kendra conveys her feelings of being cared for because although she did not win the election, after the check-ins from her peers—another humanizing process I observed the youth collective engaged in when youth were absent—she felt more like a part of a family. Alternatively, Kendra's feelings of invisibility and perception that some youth were more favored stemmed from various instances where the "same youth" were asked to lead the YOC, which, in turn, emphasized her feelings of being overlooked for her leadership.

Fatima and Nina also saw the favoritism within youth leadership from adults because they were a part of this selected group. In their interviews, Fatima and Nina offered nuance of how

the adult allies could better recognize more youth leadership in the YOC while sharing that they felt the YOC was an inclusive space. In the instance of Kendra, while she had different leadership experiences in the YOC from her other youth counterparts, she alluded to how she remained in the work because of who was in the space and the feeling of family. For Kendra, it was why she remained in the YOC after feeling jilted because as she noted, when she came to meetings, "I just feel loved and I feel like this is my family." These feelings of family and relationship-building in the coalition proved to be the foundation to why some of the youth remained in the work of organizing. They exemplified that while family can be complicated, a familial unit can also establish care, feelings of love, and dedication to try again with one another even when harm has been committed. In addition, this illumination of complicated dynamics within multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing is necessary because as Dimitriadis (2014) advised for youth resistance researchers, "we have the responsibility to avoid making our stories neat—to create heroes and imagine happy endings for them and the world they are supposed to represent" (p. 45).

Throughout this section, I situated the practices of holistic striving within the YOC that encompassed relationship-building and humanizing processes. In this relationship-building, youth enacted holistic striving in their centering of diversity, salient identities, and striving to include the holistic lived experiences and beings of the young people in the YOC. In this striving, youth were better able to navigate their ethnic-racial intersections and tensions, generated familial-like bonds, and enhanced their resistance and social and global awareness. Additionally, I showcased how relationships and familial connections are also complicated and can become contentious. But, even in the midst of all this nuance young people still expressed a deep affinity for the YOC and one another as peers and family. In this affinity, and overall,

young people grew their people power where their activism was not just for the sake of their futures, but also more intimately for the young people who became a part of their personal lives.

In this chapter, I argued the youth organizers in this study articulated an individual youth organizer identity, collective identity, and self-awareness rooted in the first fluid principle of collective visioning. Young people then catalyzed their communal reflexive praxis, the second principle, by interconnecting their personal experiences, shared struggles, and influence of peers outside of the YOC via peer learning. In this praxis they garnered greater youth voice and relational understandings of race. They advanced their coalition within the YOC by exemplifying the third fluid principle of holistic striving. Holistic striving, made possible by relationship-building and culture sharing among one another, bolstered their collective resistance. Finally, related to my second, third, and fourth research questions, by learning more about one another as young people and their cultures, youth curated a family and were able to navigate and more deeply understand their ethnic-racial intersections. This provided them an avenue to make greater meaning of their resistance, critical consciousness, and activism while advancing their coalition building. In the next chapter, I continue this argument of "synergies" through highlighting the ways the young people analyzed and grounded themselves in a collective identity as Detroiters from a raced, classed, and placed worldview. I discuss these synergies from the final two fluid principles of elevated centering and Combahee solidarity and then provide a final case study that shows how all five fluid principles coalesced in a YOC campaign.

Chapter 5 Synergies of Urban Education Inequality: Race(d), Class(ed), and Place(d) Collective Youth Organizing Identities

Building from Chapter 4, I further highlight in this chapter how youth in the YOC came together to coalition build by foregrounding the salience of Detroit as a contested urban educational space and as a coveted identity among the young people in the YOC. In Soja's (2008) terming of spatial justice he called on researchers "to understand the intersections of space, power, and knowledge in order to expose geographies that perpetuate or disrupt inequities in both processes and outcomes" (as cited in Morrison, Annamma, & Jackson, 2017). With the foundation of spatial justice, Morrison et al. (2017) situated a critical spatial analysis that locates the importance of space as socially produced and as a lens for the social, historic, and temporal contexts of educational inequities. I use Soja's and Morrison et al.'s work as lenses for explicating how the salience of space, or place in this context, informs youth's organizing and larger coalition building with other youth of color in Detroit. Place is distinctly important to consider because "places are particular and lived spaces that are consequential to economic, social, and political processes, and most importantly, the people who live, work, and school in these places day by day" (Nickson, 2020, p. 52).

Furthermore, I discuss the ways in which the young people situated their organizing efforts and ethnic-racial identities in the context of Detroit. While they discussed the avenues in which they were raced and classed, they also discussed how they faced particular inequities because of their Detroiter identities. Specifically, they saw how the three factors of race, class, and place interconnected to inform educational leaders and outsiders justification for Detroit

youth's inequitable education. Overall, I speak to my first, second, and third research questions in this chapter by illuminating the salience of place and youth's affinity for Detroit to their organizer identities, organizing, and coalition building within the YOC. Connectedly, I promulgate the final two fluid principles I have identified to discuss how youth leveraged their Detroit identities and counternarratives to coalesce around Detroit specific needs via elevated centering. I then pinpoint how the youths' different salient identities informed their organizing and campaigns through their enactment of Combahee solidarity. Lastly, I anchor the YOC's "defund the school police" campaign as a case study that highlights their intersectional organizing and reveals their utilization of the five fluid principles discussed throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

Elevated Centering: Youths' Organizing as Counteraction to the Negative Perceptions of Detroit

A key finding and understanding the youth shared in this study was their deep knowledge of Detroit and the racial storylines (Nasir, Snyder, Shah, & ross, 2012) of Detroit and its schools. Nasir et al. (2012) define racial storylines as "… vehicles for both how individuals make sense of race and how they appropriate and deploy race to position themselves and others in everyday activity" (p. 289). While the young people in this study connect Detroit's racial storylines at the intersections of race, class, and place, Nasir et al.'s definition is still useful to my finding. Youth organizers shared how they were stereotyped as students based on others' perceptions of how their race, class, and place were detrimental to their educational capabilities. Given youth's analyses, I uplift their criticality and discuss how these racial and placed storylines of Detroit's schools affected how the young people approached their educational organizing. For the youth in this study, they wore their city as a badge of honor, critiqued

decisions made by policymakers, and illustrated how Detroit was implicated in some of its' inequities (i.e., agreeing in some ways that Detroit's hardships and downfalls were, in part, fault of Detroit leaders). Importantly, youth asserted an elevated centering that speaks to the ways youth organizers of color were impacted and informed by their Detroit identity in their schooling lives and organizing. Elevated centering is how the salience of place, particularly the urbanicity of Detroit, is central to youths' activism and informs their educational organizing. In the operationalization of elevated centering, youth organizers resisted wholly deficit narratives about Detroit residents and centered the nuanced realities of Detroit as a homeplace, site of school suffering (Dumas, 2013), and community in their educational organizing and dreams for the city.

Below, I tie in how the organizers' nuanced identities as Detroit youth of color manifested into an elevated centering of their Detroit identities and was connected to the YOC's coalition building and overall organizing campaigns.

Negative Storylines of Detroit as Part Influence in Youths' Organizer Identities

The youth understood how race, class, and place framed the stereotypes of Detroit as being dangerous and inhabitable. For instance, Xiomara reflected on her experience at a Free Minds Free People (FMFP) conference in the summer of 2019. FMFP is a biannual conference that brings together organizers and social justice advocates in U.S. educational justice advocacy work. I was in attendance with her, along with one other Latinx girl from the collective, three adult allies, and one selected cohort of youth from another youth organizing group in Detroit. We decided to drive to Minneapolis, Minnesota from Detroit so that it was accessible to the young people who wanted to build with other youth organizers across the nation. While at this conference, Xiomara discussed the various youth who singled them out because they were from

Detroit. While they attended a private session only for youth, Xiomara recounted her experience while in the session:

> It … shocked us because … they talked about Detroit like if it was this horrible thing like ... It was crazy because my own people from Chicago were there, anddddd I know that in Chicago they view Detroit as this ghetto thing. Like it's so much more ghetto. It's so much hood. Like if you come from Detroit like you must have killed somebody or it was just these crazy views that they were having on us. Every time we would introduce ourselves like "Oh, hi my name is Xiomara, I'm an organizer in Detroit" they would be like "Detroit?!" and they're like "Detroit, Michigan?! Like you're talking about like T-Grizzly [hometown Black rapper] Detroit?!" … like it was so weird, they looked at Detroit so horrible and they were like "Ohhh I understand you may have more struggles than us cuz you go to Detroit." And it was like this whole thing like wow. It wasn't just, it wasn't just the Georgia people, it was the New Jersey, it was Chicago, it was Texas! It was California! It was everyone! Like it wasn't just a specific group of people umm that were saying this to us, it was basically everyone.

She went onto say that not only did they view them in pity, but also that the other youth activists talked to them as if they were "dumb" and as though they were "poorly educated." After this session, Xiomara reflected how she questioned her experiences in Detroit and asked herself, "wow are we really like this? Or is it just them?" In our interview, as I asked more questions about her experience at FMFP, Xiomara divulged that her peers in Minneapolis may have held these views about Detroit because of the media's constant enforcement of the particularly violent storylines of Detroit. Moreover, she shared that while she could agree with how "our [Detroit] schools aren't where they're supposed to be" she did not agree with how the other youth at

FMFP "put a stereotype into the people that are from Detroit." Aimee Meredith Cox's work in *Shapeshifters* is particularly important here. In her research of Black girls and women's meaning making in Detroit, she found that "… because Detroit is characterized as presently irredeemable, it is the site of continual theoretical speculation about ways of living and producing capital in the future" (Cox, 2015, p. 62). Xiomara uplifted this outside speculation in her understanding of why the young people at FMFP thought so negatively about Detroiters. She also spoke to how the media furthered this speculation by only displaying the deficits in Detroit thus, influencing others negative perceptions of them.

In another interview, Joe also connected the media's influence on the negative lens of Detroit and how they only showed "those types of cases" where they saw "Detroit as a dangerous place." Xiomara and Joe articulated this viewing as a part of their lived experiences as Detroit youth. Together, they garnered SJYD's social awareness of how media and storylines can impact a contested place such as Detroit by having specific deleterious effects on not only how that community is viewed, but also on what resources (i.e., education, funding, access to policymakers) Detroiters are perceived as being valuable enough to receive (Cox, 2015; Wilson, 2015).

Pointedly, youth discussed how the racial and placed storylines of Detroit were perpetuated within their schooling experiences. As they assessed how their schooling was influenced by negative outside perceptions of Detroit, they also spoke of wanting to eradicate some of these negative views with their organizing by way of elevated centering. In this case, elevated centering would be operationalized as youth organizers holding their love for Detroit at the center and then working to dissuade such negative perceptions of Detroit by instead highlighting the neoliberal reform agenda of state disinvestment and its erosion of public

education (Baldridge, 2014; Nygreen, 2017; Wilson, Bentley, & Kneff-Chang, 2019). For instance, Fatima attended one of the most competitive and highly sought-after schools in the city and often talked about how the school pushed the students beyond what was well for their mental health. She thought her school was so adamant about students' scholastic achievement at the expense of everything else because, to her, "we don't, as kids of color, we don't really get a lot of encouragement at home. I mean, a lot of us do, but a lot of us also don't. So they [parents and adults generally] don't really expect us to go anywhere." In her analysis, she thought this treatment was because of the history of racism in the city (i.e., the 1967 Detroit Uprising[12]) and "the stereotypes of Black and Latinx people." This lived experience of how her and her peers were viewed in Detroit influenced Fatima's organizing and ultimately, her organizer identity. For example, Fatima rooted her organizing in her desire for younger generations to be proud of their education in Detroit—a utilization of elevated centering. She articulated that one of her goals in the YOC was to help create an educational atmosphere that would generate this pride. She expressed,

> I just hope students finally get the same opportunity as everyone else … I mean, that's my main goal that students don't feel like they're inferior because of where they're learning or because they didn't have a science teacher or a math teacher or moving on to a different, you know, grade and at a different school and stressing, "Why didn't you learn this? You should have learned this." And then, not being able to explain, "I didn't have a teacher", or "… My teacher was bad. …" But in general, to be able to change

[12] The Uprising of 1967 was one of the worst race riots in the twentieth century. The uprising in Detroit was sparked after a police raid of an unlicensed bar in the city. While the raid was the spark, Black communities were fighting against decades-long racism from white police officers. This uprising resulted in over forty deaths, hundreds of injuries, and thousands of arrests (https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/uprising-1967).

those situations because a lot of kids probably feel like they're failing because of themselves.

Fatima's analysis is important as it highlights the goals of resistance within youths' organizing and the schooling environments in which they were trying to change. Additionally, similar to how Butler (2018) applauded the analyses of Black girl cartographers, I too uplift Fatima's keen understanding of "… the connections between oppressions and geopolitical sociocultural locations" (p. 29). In this way, Fatima elucidated how the specific social contexts of Detroit had unjust implications for their schooling which in turn influenced her organizing via elevated centering. In this, she acknowledged the tenuous reality that Detroit children were struggling in specific ways (i.e., inequitable school funding and lack of mental health supports) and were consequently constrained by the inability of Detroit's decision-makers to create a schooling atmosphere where youth would want to attend. Through the lens of her social awareness, Fatima understood these complex realities and centered their nuance and specificity in her organizing. In this case, Fatima provided deeper analyses about *Detroit's* inadequate education and also her desire for her peers to be proud of their city's education.

Comparably, Amirah in their interview described how they had become accustomed to under-resourced schools in the city and were surprised when they experienced a resource-rich school in Detroit. When I asked them to describe some of their Detroit schooling experiences, they painted the following picture of the previous Detroit public schools they attended and their experience at a highly-resourced school in DPSCD that Fatima spoke to above:

Amirah: I've also gone to school gone to school where there was like, uh, like it felt like the school didn't belong in the city … Like there were just so many resources or like so many, like, extracurricular activities to choose from.

Naomi: Why would you say it didn't belong in the city?

Amirah: Like, as opposed to the schools that I and my peers had been used to and like accepted as the norm. It was very interesting to go from, um, like, broken textbooks and no art class, no gym class to a school that, like, seemed like a castle, you know? Like, made out of glass and had eight floors and 50 different extracurriculars to choose from.

Amirah overviewed how they, and students in Detroit, "accepted as the norm" under-resourced schools so much that when they were presented with a school that had a wealth of resources, it was abnormal to them. Amirah also explicated a critical lens on the larger context of Detroit's neoliberal education in that "… the neoliberal restructuring of the urban space results in the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities for well-being" (Waitoller & Radinsky, 2017, p. 150). Yet, like Fatima, Amirah still described a passion for Detroit and a desire to fight for their city because they knew Detroiters deserved quality schooling despite what had been normalized. As Gadsden et al. (2019) found of urban youth in Philadelphia, youths' "… knowledge of and involvement in various sociopolitical issues have been shaped by their firsthand and frequent lived encounters with injustice in their own lives …" (p. 85). Correspondingly, Fatima and Amirah were also informed by their firsthand experiences of unjust education in Detroit—a key aspect of their social awareness—and were influenced to "break the mold" to be a part of creating another educational reality for Detroit youth.

The fluid principle of elevated centering in the needs of Detroit students was central to the YOC meetings as well as youth organizers who often sought their peer's feedback and opinions on what they wanted for Detroit's education. In a YOC Zoom meeting in April 2020, youth organizers came together to discuss their demands for the school board, legislature, and Michigan's Governor Whitmer. Key to their policy demands was youth's answering the question

"what do YOU want?," which they posed to themselves and to their Detroit peers outside of the YOC. Both youth and adult allies wanted more input from Detroit youth as it related to specific Detroit elections and policies that would affect the city. Here, youth would both educate their peers on related Detroit policies and cases and then seek greater Detroit youth input on what they wanted to see change, such as the literacy lawsuit. This case was won with the help of Detroit Vitality recognizing state policymakers' role in the lack of Detroit youth's literacy attainment due to underfunding and disinvestment by the state. To better grasp this central question of the YOC meeting, youth facilitated breakouts guided by two questions: "why is community so important to us during this time?" and "what changes do we want to see for us?" In the breakout group I was a part of as an adult ally, Kendra was the leader and asked us (three adult allies) to define strength and resistance in our own words. In the collective meeting, there were 12 youth and eight adult allies (including myself), which caused for disproportionate adult representation in the breakouts including the one I was a part of. Nonetheless, Kendra led us with confidence by facilitating the meeting and asking us to be a part of the generative answering of what youth could achieve in the policy demands they were making to get more funding for Detroit schools and students. These tactics, such as the key questions youth created to ask one another and the continual pulse of youth at the center, were critical aspects of elevated centering in the YOC. Later in the virtual YOC meeting another Latinx girl (not a part of this study) shared her understandings of how schools were presently operating and that "schools are outdated," "schools is not a one size fits all," and that "each students needs different types of support and that's why so many are struggling with mental health" (Fieldnote April 15, 2020). Youth in the call were in agreement and, although they were abnormally quiet in the meeting, took over the Zoom chat with agreement after their peer spoke of specific supports for Detroit youth. Fatima

wrote how she "used to learn and go to school then high school happened" and Joe talked about missing kindergarten (Fieldnote, April 15, 2020). Within their curated collective social awareness, the youth in the meeting spoke to how they were not being centered as *Detroit* students and how they needed specific supports that were tailored to their needs and realities. Even in their sharing with one another, they exhibited elevated centering where they could account for the various inequities and struggles within the city, and still held that their desires must be central to urban educational change and decision-making.

"We're All so Unified": Detroit as the Interconnection Between Youth's Organizer Identities. In youths' navigation of the racial and placed storylines of Detroit, one of the ways they resisted was through their defining of Detroit as a place of community filled with many different cultures, histories, and people. As mentioned above, the youth organizers in this study expressed a passion for their city that was interrelated with an affinity to being *Detroit* youth of color. In interviews and focus groups, all the youth talked about the nuances of Detroit and how they were more likely to be positioned in a deficit frame. Alternatively, the youth acknowledged that while their community had struggles, it was not the full picture. They dictated what hooks (1990) named a "homeplace" that Black women created as a site of resistance for themselves and their families. She said these constructions were "… about the construction of a safe place where Black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks, 1990; 2001, p. 384). Dina illustrated Detroit's homeplace where she affirmed the different cultures of the city that made up their home. She saw Detroit as a remarkably diverse place, but also unified, similar to how I described how the youth discussed their youth collective space in Chapter 4. Dina stated,

> There are so many different parts of Detroit and like, the different cultures, that's hard to just describe it as one Detroit … but I feel like we're all so unified in that same way. We have a lot of pride in our city and like, growing up in Detroit. Right? And I feel like one reason why is because usually when you hear the name Detroit the media's like, "Ugh. You know, like, oh, it's Detroit." Like, crime rates and you know, danger, all this stuff, right? But we like, we grew up there. So, I feel like that makes us just so much more connected and related in that way.

Dina hones in on the complex nature of growing up in a contested place like Detroit but firmly asserts, "we grew up there [Detroit]." She elevated the love for Detroit, which connected not only the city, but also her and her peers within the YOC by stating, "we have a lot of pride in our city." In other data contexts, all the youth organizers held similar sentiments of how their shared Detroit identity brought them together. For instance, in the Latinx focus group, Nina was assessing her experiences as growing up in Detroit and what she hesitantly called "the hood." In her hesitation, Nina expressed how this terming could be understood as "offensive" but that it was the best way to describe where they were from in Detroit. "The hood" has come to denote an area with largely people of color, high poverty, and a particular urbanicity. In her line of assessment, Nina discussed a shared or collective struggle that tied Detroit youth together because they were from these hoods. Xiomara continued Nina's line of thinking stating,

> … living in that type of environment it's a different type of struggle. And it's like we're not silver spooned, so we all can agree on some struggles. And I feel like that's where we're like, "okay, well we struggled, but this is exactly why we should fight for this" [education justice and overall social justice]. So it's kind of like where we can empower

each other cuz we're like, "okay, do we want the other generations to be exactly how we were?"

For Xiomara, she drew upon a self and social awareness that connected her reason for education justice to her and her peers' experiences of struggle in Detroit, particularly educational inequality. From Dina, Nina, and Xiomara's accounts they noted their Detroit unity, which informed their "why" for organizing. While they all identified as youth of color, they also identified as Detroiters, which informed how they understood their organizer identities and further substantiated their resistance. These young girls of color also resistively depicted the complex social geography of Detroit where the city is constructed of "spaces of inclusion and exclusion" (Butler, 2018, p. 32) that influenced their educational organizing.

Youth organizers articulated how their counter-stories of Detroit as a community and place of pride informed their organizing identities such that this love for their city was core to their labor. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) stipulate that counter-story is a "… method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 32). Counter-stories derived from the tenets of critical race theory (CRT). CRT originated from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to address the effects of race and racism within the U.S. legal system (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, 2005). Decuir and Dixson (2004) stated that "CRT focuses directly on the effects of race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of white supremacy …" (p. 27). Moreover, CRT emphasizes "… the centrality and permanence of race, valuing racially and culturally relevant epistemologies based on people of color's lived experiences, and infusing macrolevel analyses of oppressive marginalizing forces" (Wilson, 2015, p. 4). Thus, as a byproduct of CRT, counter-stories center the voices of the marginalized and allow for communities of color to situate their experiential knowledge as a valid and influential to their

identities. Along with other scholars, I add that the place of communities of color also shapes their identities (Cox, 2015; Trinidad, 2011). Cox (2015) found that Detroiters have a double consciousness that "… involves simultaneously reading themselves and others through the emotionally colored implications of race, class, and place" (p. 43). This is the context where youth organizers of color lie and is at the base of their counter-narratives. In Amirah's counter-story, they explicated a more dynamic picture of Detroit that, to them, was "just very tight-knit and familial." Indeed, these "tight-knit and familial" feelings resembled the YOC as well. I argue that these familial ties both within Detroit and within the YOC are interrelated, which inevitably informs youth's coalition building. Similar to youths' articulation of their "why" in the development of their collective visioning in Chapter 4, youth uncovered their "why" for organizing to themselves, their city, and for each other because of their sameness as youth organizers from Detroit.

Nina, too, shared how she understood that while her community had a lot of abandoned buildings and violence, it still had a "look" that "comes together." She went on to say, "everyone likes that look, and now that people are coming in and changing the look, we're mad. We don't want you to change the look ... we just, we want, safer schools. We just want better resources." The "look" Nina felt did not need to be altered was the graffiti art and layout of the city; it was residents' access to resources that needed change. Like Amirah, Nina saw her community's cultural wealth that Yosso (2005) described as "… an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). This wealth was present, and as Nina noted, although Detroit communities possess this wealth, they still needed financial resources to provide safer and quality schools. Brilliantly, Nina, in her social awareness and elevated centering, analyzed the

love for Detroit in its complexity and argued for safer schools and not the repudiation of Detroit's beauty.

In separate interviews, Fatima and Nina also discussed the "people power" in Detroit. In particular, Fatima reflected on the youth power in Detroit. She talked about how she went to a youth event in Ypsilanti, Michigan (a neighboring city 30 minutes away from Detroit) and how she met other youth who were using rap to talk about the historical injustices of Black people. She then said, "it was just very like powerful because they were youth and you see a lot of that in Detroit. Now, a lot of youth are trying to get involved and I feel like that's very, very good." Nina expanded this power of Detroit youth to people of color generally in Detroit and the ways they came together despite being impoverished and traumatized. In talking about people of color she claimed,

> I think we're all just the same in a certain way, and we all grew up with certain struggles that people did not grow up ... like, out of the hood, they did not grow up with the same struggles we did … I feel like poverty is the root of a lot of problems, like, just of family problems, stress. Like, the fact that a lot of parents, like, do drugs and don't take care of their kids, that's all because of, like, money. And people out there [white people in the suburbs], they have money, so they don't worry about certain stuff like that. But, even though we don't have a lot, I feel like we do what we have to get enough, and then, when we get enough, we share it.

While it can be read that Nina was utilizing a deficit lens, she instead was articulating a structural lens for why her community members were struggling. Khalifa et al. (2016) help substantiate Nina's lens in that they also theorized how systems and policies have ensured the disenfranchisement of Detroit community members. They argued that, "… overtures and edicts

of *freedom and justice for all* have consistently been contradicted by political, economic, and educational systems and policies that have disenfranchised and marginalized people of color and other non-dominant groups" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 8). These racist systems and policies are implicated in the poverty rates within Detroit and communities' suffering. Similarly, what is key in Nina's assessment was pointing out the *why*. The why being the stress of being low-income, not having enough supports, and the endemic nature of white supremacy and systemic racism that allows and perpetuates such inequities (Gillborn, 2007). And yet, Nina also uplifted that even in the midst of such injustice and harm, people of color came together and shared what little they had; they exhibited their fullness of a community cultural wealth.

Additionally, Nina's analyses are part of a larger conceptualization of urban spaces that speaks to its dynamism and power and not just the prevalence of issues. In Mattis, Palmer, and Hope's (2019) piece on the links between religiosity, spirituality, and positive development of Black urbanites, they conceptualize urban spaces as

> … densely populated, dynamic human settlements, whose spatial design, systems of organization, economies, culture, and practices of governance are rooted in ideologies and enactments of power that are raced, classed, and gendered in ways that have profound implications for the development of urban residents. (p. 3)

In this, Nina also spoke of these ideologies and enactments in the ways communities are resistive in how they provide for one another (even if they themselves are lacking) in an urban core that solely views them as deficit. Moreover, youth's ties to their communities and desire for change were also a part of their coalition building among one another and across the city. Again, the youth organizers were articulating from their positionalities of being minoritized, as well as

being from Detroit, and how this duality created a particular experience for them as Detroit youth, which informed their understandings of their organizer identities.

Youths' Embodiment of Combahee Solidarity to Resist the Located Educational Inequities in Detroit

This dissertation hones in on the ways youth organizers of color were informed personally and socio-politically by being a part of a multiracial-multiethnic organizing collective. Data showed that these youth mentored one another and learned to articulate their lived educational experiences into collective experiences. These specific and collective experiences created their demands, campaigns, and overall educational justice initiatives in Detroit. Together, I argue youth organizers in this study engendered a Combahee solidarity, the final fluid principle that I posit. Firstly, Combahee solidarity pays homage to the 1977 Combahee River Collective referenced in Chapter 4. Rooted in Black feminism, this group of Black feminist lesbians engaged in political work to address the intersectional oppressions that affected Black women and bridged coalitions with other organizations and movements in the struggle against "racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" (The Combahee River Collective Statement as cited in Taylor, 2017, p. 15). As a powerful Black feminist entity, they saw their primary task as "… the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppressions are interlocking" and how "the synthesis of these oppressions" created their lived conditions (The Combahee River Collective Statement as cited in Taylor, 2017, p. 15). Hence, this final fluid principle of Combahee solidarity represents the ways in which young people built power by utilizing their coalition to address their specific and collective organizing needs both in their partner organizations and in the larger YOC. I argue youth, in part, embodied a Combahee solidarity via their analyses of their cross-cutting educational inequities and their multiracial-

multiethnic educational justice organizing. I say "in part" because youth were not operating from a Black feminist lens like that of the Combahee River Collective, but they were engaging in critical analysis of the intersecting issues across their differently identified communities and the salience of these identities in their experiences separately, and collectively. In the following pages, I highlight some of this work in their coalition building and how they came to the YOC for both their specific needs in their partner organizations and the YOC's collective needs for educational equity. Importantly, I argue that young people in this study contributed to the future work of youth organizers across the country who also strive to build broad-based coalitions with similarly marginalized young people.

Below, with regard to my second research question, I specifically analyzed how the place of Detroit and its communities was influential to how a multiracial-multiethnic community-based organization advanced youth's coalition building. I first provide brief contexts of Detroit schooling and then uplift how, within Detroit's schooling contexts, youth utilized their coalition for specific and collective educational organizing within the city and with the spirit of Combahee solidarity.

Briefly Reviewing Detroit's Educational Landscape

Detroit youth organize in a city with a rich history of educational activism. As one of the few largest cities with the most Black residents, Detroit has historically been known for its historic activism such as the 1966 Northern High School walkouts against racial discrimination, the activism and labor movement of the auto workers, and currently for its educational activism through the work of local non-profits and CBOs (Boggs & Kurashige, 2012; Franklin, 2006; Gonzales & Shields, 2014; Hetrick et al., 2020). Youth organizers are also immersed in a city that they call home and has a magnifying glass on what outsiders consider Detroit's failures

(Boggs & Kurashige, 2012; Cox, 2015; Wilson, 2015). The youth understand that they are in a paradox of being in an urban center that has both rich community activism and also faces demonizing descriptions of its failures and losses. Like the members of Detroit Vitality, Detroit residents have taken it upon themselves to highlight a Detroit that they know and love, one that is full of its promise and not its infamous instability. For context, I briefly extend discussions of Detroit's well-known educational instability that I offered in Chapter 3.

Detroit's public education system was taken over by the state in 2009, which was followed by a long line of mismanagement, loss of students and teachers, and overall disenfranchisement of one of the largest urban districts that has 98% students of color (Einhorn, 2017; Telford, 2018; Wilson, 2015). The picture of Detroit becomes starker when reviewing the numbers of students who have left the district. As an example, "in 1970, Detroit enrolled 289,743 students … yet by the 2014–2015 school year, the district only enrolled 47,959 students … representing an 83% enrollment decline" (Holme, Finnigan, & Diem, 2016, p. 15). In a recent *New York Times* article about the miseducation of Detroit students, Savit (2019) not only noted the student loss, but also the inundation of substitute teachers and lack of teachers overall. He found that "in one school in 2015, the math teacher resigned a few weeks into the school year … an eighth-grade student was tasked for a month with teaching both seventh- and eighth-grade math" (Savit, 2019). Instances such as classes being wrought with inexperienced teachers, lack of resources, and the overall inequitable education are the examples in which the youth of the CBO are fighting against and are working to highlight in their organizing efforts.

Tapping into the Coalition for Specific and Collective Youth Organizing

As highlighted in Chapter 3, the structure of the YOC was created with the intention to build greater people power and to bridge the different advocacy organizations in Detroit. Their

structure allowed the young people to both utilize their coalition for their specific neighborhood organization campaigns, as well as their overall education justice aims. Dina articulated this same understanding when I asked her about the benefits of being in a diverse coalition like the YOC and if she thought other groups should be similarly structured. With immediate agreement she stated,

> I think it's really important especially … based on what issue … that youth group wants to fight, right? Because education inequality isn't just an issue for the Black community, or the Hispanic community, or the Arab community, right? ... It impacts all of us.

Dina's understandings are important because they were reflective of why the CBO was created and how the YOC was folded within its larger network. Importantly, Dina's analyses are linked to global awareness a part of SJYD in her empathy with other marginalized populations. But, as a core concept of Combahee solidarity, Dina expanded global awareness out to action in that organizing within multiracial-multiethnic coalitions requires deeper analyses of the issues that affect multiple marginalized groups' ability to serve as the conduit for greater collective power and activism.

Specifically, while sentiments of intersectionality are discussed in Chapter 4, here, I forefront the enactment of Combahee solidarity within the YOC and their discussions of their intersectional organizing explicitly. The youth in the YOC saw education as their primary issue and worked within their neighborhood organizations throughout Detroit to directly organize around inequities that were more specific to their communities. It is important to note that not all youth fit seamlessly into this structure as some over time became more involved in the YOC and stopped being a part of their neighborhood organizations, or came to the YOC without any neighborhood affiliation. However, overall, the young people were mostly affiliated with partner

organizations and were able to organize specifically to their home organization's priorities and the priorities of the general collective. The YOC located both their shared struggles and distinct struggles, thus engendering a Combahee solidarity.

As an example, the young people hosted virtual political education weeks in April 2020 that were specific to their organization's priorities. The organizations were not always racially and ethnically specific in their larger organizing work, but often used their activism for neighborhood needs. To keep the greater Detroit youth engaged in the YOC's work during the pandemic, the adult allies and youth came together to lead political education Instagram stories from the specific partner organizations and the CBO's Instagram accounts. In Hetrick et al.'s (2020) article, they highlighted how community and youth organizers engage in critical literacy praxis via their use of social media. Given activists use of social media for social justice aims they position "… social media as a new public square for negotiating and challenging public discourse …" and as sites that are "… tools and spaces for negotiating power" (Hetrick et al., 2020, p. 28). In this same usage, each youth-lead of their organizations created political education topics and, throughout the five days in the week, touched on subsets of that larger issue. They used their social media to both create and share the political education they were learning within the YOC and their partner organizations. Below, I charted out the participating organizations, the youth who were a part of this study who were affiliated with those organizations, and the political education topics for the weeks from April 2020 to June 2020.

Table 5-1: The Youth Organizing Collectives' Political Education Weeks April-June 2020

Organization Name	ACT NOW (Sky)	Co-Create (Fatima)	Families Together (Kendra)	HOPE (Dina & Zara)	JustUs (Xiomara)	Latinidad United (Nina)
Political Education Topics	The government's role in education	History of activism with Cinco De Mayo	Census history	Voting, census, and importance of youth voice	Immigration and sanctuary schools in DPSCD	Youth rights

A commonality among these issues were their implications for Detroit and the needs of the particular communities the neighborhood in which the organization was located (i.e., Detroit's needs to improve census participation; the collective push for more voter involvement in the city). Certain youth, and their organizations, catalyzed around specific moments to advance their specific issues. As an example, Xiomara was a major advocate for immigrant rights given her identities and connections, and often brought specific issues of undocumented rights to the YOC. Since undocumented rights was one of Xiomara's passions, her partner organization chose to advocate for DPSCD to be a sanctuary district[13] in their political education week. In April 2020, HOPE—an organization that primarily served Arab American populations—leveraged the YOC to support their issue of getting Eid[14], a religious holiday for Muslim communities, recognized as a holiday on the DPSCD calendar. In a YOC meeting on April 22, 2020, the youth spent a large portion of the meeting co-organizing with HOPE youth to support their efforts. The Eid calendar advocacy was further reinforced when Fatima read the

[13] Sanctuary districts were created to push school leaders to protect undocumented students and their families from ICE when young people and their families were on school grounds.
[14] Eid al-Fitr, or Eid, is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide to commence the end of the month-long fast, Ramadan.

main goal of the April YOC meeting aloud stating the purpose as "supporting our Muslim siblings in preparation for Ramadan." The examples presented above are illustrations of Combahee solidarity where the collective was a source for greater people power in their specific organizing (i.e., the advocacy for Eid to be recognized in the DPSCD calendar) and their intersectional work (i.e., overall inclusion and equitable access and safety within local policies and schools). Additionally, the efforts of the partner organizations within the YOC further highlight how youth were informed by and advanced in their coalition building efforts to address Detroit's contexts and salient issues for Detroit students of color.

Collectively, the YOC rooted their efforts into different education efforts such as advocating for more resources for DPSCD and greater accountability from charter schools within the district. While most of the youth were a part of the public schools within Detroit's district, there were also groups of youth, such as the Arab American youth a part of HOPE, who were at the predominantly Arab American charter school noted in Chapter 4. Like other highly contested urban school spaces like Chicago and New Orleans, Detroit was a hotbed for charter school proliferation and neoliberal reforms (Khalifa et al., 2016; Wilson, 2015). In the case of urban centers, the inundation of multiple school types under the neoliberal school regime results in poor school choices for urban communities. As Waitoller & Radinsky (2017) argue, "… the closing of 'poorly performing' or low-enrollment schools and the opening of new charter, selective-enrollment, and turnaround schools restructures the urban educational space, producing geographies of uneven educational opportunities" (p. 150). Due to the immense amount of charter schools that were being opened and closed in the city, the young people in the collective often discussed their experiences of the charter schools' lack of oversight and accountability. One response to the lack of accountability from DPSCD and charter schools was the YOC's

launch of a "Revitalize MI Schools[15]" listening campaign with their peers throughout Detroit. The Revitalize MI Schools campaign was co-created by adult allies and YOC after the start of COVID-19 to solicit Detroiters in their wants for DPSCD and to leverage community voice in community decision-making for the future of Detroit schools. Given the contexts of COVID-19 and how much schools were upended, the adult allies helped steer the young people to see the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportune time to advocate for more youth voice in their schools. Adults initially posited the charge that, due to COVID-19, youth could be a part of revitalizing schools to be more centered on their needs. Youth responded in affirmation of this analysis and thought through how virtual schooling could be the first possibility of change. In both the youth and adult allies' eyes, because schools had to drastically change to accommodate the new pandemic reality, they wanted to use this as an opportunity to completely restructure schools. Collectively, the YOC came together and mapped out how many surveys each neighborhood organization would be responsible for collecting and how many focus groups each organization would lead. Each organization committed to collecting at least 100 online surveys (some as many as 150 surveys) and ranged between 2-3 focus groups with young people from their personal and neighborhood networks (Fieldnote, June 24, 2020). This collective organizing was another example of Combahee solidarity in how they leveraged their coalition to attract diverse youth voice and bolster their larger educational campaigns to advocate for needs that affected them all.

Combahee solidarity also ties into the global awareness tenet of SJYD in my conceptual framework. Young people utilized notions of global awareness in not only empathizing with other oppressed peoples, but also pushed this tenet further by becoming a part of other oppressed

[15] I am using a pseudonym for the campaign to continue to protect Detroit Vitality's anonymity.

community's movements. Through global awareness, youth were better able to enact their Combahee solidarity because they could link their issues more globally, and in this case more locally across Detroit. I have linked how their coalition building was informed by the ways they engaged with one another in their partner organization and YOC campaigns. I also made connections to how the salience of Detroit was ripe ground for their coalition and for the different campaigns they embarked upon. Building on these connections, I assert that the youth organizers' demonstration of Combahee solidarity reveals how justice and liberation are tied to the lived realities of other marginalized communities. Operationalized, youth in their Combahee solidarity uphold the diverse salient identities within the YOC, recognize and assert intersecting oppressions, and advocate for the various issues that matters most to them.

The next and final section of this chapter will be a case study of one of the biggest campaigns the YOC had over the years: policing and defunding the police in the DPSCD. This case will illustrate all five fluid principles of collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, holistic striving, elevated centering, and Combahee solidarity from across my findings chapters, and its intersections to my conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2.

A Detroit Case Study: Navigating the Specific and Collective Demands of Defunding the Police in a Multiracial-Multiethnic Youth Organizing Collective

In 2019, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a troubling and timely report on the lack of school mental health staff within U.S. public schools and the inundation of school police. This report bridged data from 2015–2016 academic year through the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) to compare access to school-based mental health (SBMH) services and personnel to police in schools. This report is novel as it "… provides the first state-level student-to-staff ratio analysis of SBMH personnel, as well as state-level reporting law enforcement

personnel" (Whitaker et al., 2019, p. 9). Unsurprisingly to many youth in schools with police and activists against school-to-prison pipeline, the report found that millions of students were in schools with police but lacked critical access to SBMH personnel. Some troubling key findings are as follows: 67,000 schools had no social worker, 43% of public schools had no psychologists, and across the nation there were more sworn police officers in schools than social workers within schools (Whitaker et al., 2019). In the case of Michigan, it had the second highest caseload of school counselors in the country and was one of the top ten states that had a large increase in school arrests at 70% (Whitaker et al., 2019). These schooling contexts are incredibly important to understand in the YOC's fight for defunding school police that I outline in the following pages. The vignette below spotlights the youth-led Defund the School Police rally on June 15, 2020.

"No Justice! No Peace Until DPS Doesn't have Police!": Collective Power in Youth's Defund Detroit School Police Campaign

In connection to the resurge of the larger Black Lives Matter movement in summer 2020, youth and adult allies came together to hold a defund school police rally in downtown Detroit. In true organizing fashion, over the course of a few days, the YOC and adult allies planned a rally to share youth's demands on defunding school police and an investment in Detroit youths' mental health. On June 15, 2020, I arrived at the rally site and first checked in with Tera, lead organizing director. I was given the task of keeping the youth on their rally schedule and making sure young people were primed to speak at the rally when it was their turn to have the mic. Once I got to the actual site, I saw current YOC members and YOC alumni wearing masks and speaking to one another excitedly while sharing about their pandemic realities as it was the first time we all saw each other in-person in four months. With much love from me, I too was

excitedly chatting with the young people and sharing love from a distance because we had missed our in-person time together over the months. I noticed that there were youth and adults from partner organizations not directly a part of the YOC and saw a wall of young people sitting on bricks as they waited for the rally to begin.

As planned, local news crews started arriving on the scene ready to film youths' shared dreams for DPSCD to be a police-free district. One by one, youth and adults spoke about their desires for an investment in students and a divestment from the DPSCD police department (DPSCD-PD). In total, we had 12 speakers and seven speakers were young people. Of the youth participants in this study, Fatima, Sky, Brandi, and Dina were all speakers filling various roles. Fatima, Sky, and Brandi spoke about their experiences with police and policing in schools, and Dina was a part of the larger group of youth who announced the demands. I was also an instrumental participant in this rally as I co-created the rally agenda and helped young people with their speeches and transitions. While I assisted in the flow and cadence of the speeches, the young people dictated their experiences and feelings related to why they wanted the elimination of DPSCD-PD. Fatima spoke of the need for mental health, Sky spoke about her own policing experience and the desire to feel safe and invested in, and Brandi discussed the connections of anti-Blackness inherent in policing in the US and her disdain of the metal detectors within her school. I sat there in awe as each youth so powerfully took the stage, grabbed their microphone and read out what was near and dear to them. They articulated that they wanted to feel safe and secure, and they desired to be treated like students who wanted a quality education rather than "criminal[s]" in the words of Brandi.

Near the end of the rally, youth shared their demands standing side-by-side, and each recited the demand in their different languages. Dina and her sister said their demands in Arabic,

Brandi read her demand in English, and Fatima and another Latinx girl read their demands in Spanish. Together they demanded (1) a release on data from DPSCD-PD; (2) an investment in community-led safety and constructed by parents, students, school leaders, and developmental professionals; 3) a fully defunded DPSCD-PD; and (4) a co-constructed anti-racist district. They presented a united front for their dreams of a police-free district and embodied a Combahee solidarity. At the end of our protest, Tera (organizing director of Detroit Vitality) asked a younger Black woman adult ally to recite one of her poems that connected to social justice and the ever-present policing of communities of color. At the end of her poem she posed a call and response, key to most rallies and protests, where with our hands cupping our masked mouths, we exclaimed back to one another Assata Shakur's famous lines: "It is our duty to fight for our freedom! It is our duty to win! We must love each other and support each other! We have nothing to lose but our chains!"

Above, I began with the rally that was a key organizing tactic and strategy in the YOC's efforts to defund the DPSCD-PD. The vignette illustrated how the youth coalesced together in a campaign that had particular importance to all of them, but also noted implications for Black communities. Below, I provide a deeper analysis of the campaign and its linkages across my five fluid principles and conceptual framework. Given the principles' fluidity, some are emphasized in multiple, relevant instances whereas others are particularly salient to one example.

Defunding school police in DPSCD was a reoccurring demand that was brought up in the YOC throughout the years. In the summer of 2020, defunding police became a renewed prominent demand given the Black Lives Matter (BLM) moment. BLM is a larger movement for the protection and justice of Black lives. Founded in 2013 after the murder of Trayvon Martin—a Black teen who was shot in his father's neighborhood for being a Black male wearing a hoodie,

Black Lives Matter was founded to "… eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes" (Black Lives Matter, 2021). This call to action also inspired the YOC to revitalize their desire to remove security officers from schools and replace them with counselors via their "counselors over cops" campaign (discussed later in this section), of which the DPSCD-PD rally was a tactic. The campaign also set the infrastructure for how other community members could get on board with the campaign by advocating for more counselors and mental health resources. Dina highlighted this best in how she viewed organizing as working towards collective aims, but also held center how certain issues targeted specific groups. As an example, she provided,

> So, if we look at, like, um, the prison-industrial complex … that mainly impacts the Black community, right? But I think it is still really important to have allies so like ... even though this is mainly impacting this community, and we're not speaking for you, but we're gonna help, like, speak with you and uplift your voice.

Additionally, Dina, along with the other youth a part of this study, uplifted that the police campaign had especial impact for the Black community given the particular history of police brutality in Black communities. Dina, as a Yemeni Muslim girl, held the fluid principle of collective visioning where she saw the importance of allies to bolster the voices of those who were most impacted by a selected issue. She could assess how the prison-industrial complex was predominately impacting Black communities and also her role as an ally, or better a co-conspirator, to uplift the issue from her positioning; a collective vision of justice that was in collaboration with her Black comrades.

In raising awareness about their defund DPSCD-PD campaign and seeking more allies, the youth in the YOC saw how various communities could benefit from removing police from

schools. For instance, in May 2020, youth were sharing flyers with various statistics such as how in 2019, DPSCD spent $18 million on cameras and alarms and $534,000 on metal detectors. In part, the YOC had to use their mainstay counter statistic of how DPSCD spent only $992,000 on social workers in 2015 because they could not access more recent data. Therefore, the release of current DPSCD data on counselors, social workers, mental health resources, and more data on the state of the police in DPSCD became a part of their demands as noted in the vignette. These calls for the release of data are also in alignment with the ACLU's findings that across the nation, schools underreported schools' police presence making it hard for activists to adequately advocate for their anti-policing demands (Whitaker et al., 2019). At a collective meeting on May 31, 2020, the YOC used their social awareness of the intersections of race and policing to circulate information about the data of the DPSCD-PD, such as how it was the only full service for a district in the entire state of Michigan. Youth demonstrated the fluid principle of elevated centering when they connected the significance of defunding DPSCD-PD because of Detroit's racial demographics and political overtures of anti-Blackness with DCSCD-PD being the only full service for a district in the entire state. Yet, in Detroit Vitality, while the youth were on one accord to pursue the demand of defunding the DPSCD-PD as a major campaign, the adults of the network were not.

In a June 2020 co-chair meeting with Brandi and Dina, Kevin (director of youth organizing) discussed the defund police campaign and how he noticed that communities had a lot of "internalized racism" in their network. Kevin revealed the anti-Blackness present in their multiracial-multiethnic CBO where some communities associated safety with police and unsafety with Black youth (Dumas, 2013; Dumas & ross, 2016). He used this to explain the hesitancy of why some adult organizers were against the framing of defunding police, and as a

result, the adults decided to change the campaign from "defund the police" to something more palatable for the network such as "invest in safety." In particular, Brandi, a Black girl organizer, was quite upset by this change and voiced that amid Black Lives Matter protests this change was unacceptable. She stated, "we shouldn't have changed our wording and our passion just to get more people on board," and that it was "sugarcoating defunding the police." While much discord or tension among the ethnic-racial intersections of the youth and adult allies were not as salient in this study, there were moments such as this one where tensions were luminous. In Brandi's critique was her noting that youth were not consulted and they did not have the opportunity to engage in these intersectional issues with the adults. Due to this oversight, the adults could not present a united decision that incorporated the youths' voices. While the intent was to include more people to advance their collective power—an aim of holistic striving—the impact of the changed wording resulted in less trust from the youth. Moreover, the adult's rephrasing was at the expense of the inherent critical and abolitionist lenses of ridding police from schools. Here, holistic striving was blatantly lacking and did not account for the necessary stipulation that youth, in fact, were about defunding police *and* investing in their overall safety via mental health supports.

In their continued efforts to defund school police in Detroit, youth and adult allies strategized to bridge mental health resources as the connector to everyone and thus, created their "counselors over cops" campaign. Relatedly, Xiomara shared her connection to the campaign with how police induced her anxiety due to her citizenship status. She said,

> … personally for me, um, seeing a body of like police, it brings me so much anxiety. It like connects that to my trauma and my worries, and I know that I'm not the only one. So,

> that's why I feel like I push so much for that [defunding the police] as well, because not only is it not necessary, but it's also messing with your mental health.

Key here is how Xiomara said "I push for that so much *as well*," which indicated how she saw herself within the overall campaign, although identifying as a Latinx youth. Particularly, Xiomara located her own fears of the police from her undocumented youth lens and also uplifted the anxiety for youth of color overall, given the history and presence of ICE and police brutality on communities of color. Here is an example of Combahee solidarity where young people navigated the specific issues with affected communities (i.e., police brutality and Black communities) and located the issue within other communities as well. Xiomara held both the need for Black communities and saw the importance of defunding police for undocumented communities especially given the heighted presence of ICE during the Trump presidency.

While Xiomara exhibited solidarity in the campaign, Brandi and Sky spoke to their experiences with policing within their schools and encounters with school police. In Brandi's experiences that she mentioned at the rally, she expressed how she felt when she walked into her school building and the first thing she saw was a metal detector. She expressed,

> … when I first walked in the building, I see a metal detector and like a security guard telling me, "Aye, open your bag." Not no "hey" or nothing, just "open your bag." And that just like, that just really makes me mad, cause it's like "bro, what? Why? This- we're not criminals. Like why do y'all think we criminals? Why's this placed in my school?"

Brandi interlocked how the placing of metal detectors, the lack of humanity showed to students by security guards, and the need to go through their bags was a sign of the administrators seeing students of color as criminals. This over-policing of youth of color was an important talking point for the youth in their organizing and strategies. Sky had a more direct traumatic experience

with a security guard at her school that made her especially vocal about the defunding school police campaign. She shared her traumatic experience with a security guard in seventh grade that further enforced her fight against school police. She recounted,

> So, this one time, we weren't supposed to bring snacks inside the school. And I just happened to bring in cheeses. So, I was eating them inside the gym with my friends, talking to my friends, and there, um, a security came out of nowhere, and next thing I know I was hitting the ground. Because they said that we weren't supposed to have snacks or anything like that in school … and I know. 'Cause I thought they was gonna take it [the snacks] at the door, but they didn't, 'cause it was in my bag … I tried to report them [the security guard who tackled her] to the office, but they [school administrators], um ... they just dismissed him when he came to the office. They just dismissed him. And they was like, "You know you wasn't supposed to bring this inside the school," and stuff like that. And that really had a huge impact on me, because, like, you didn't know if I had a concussion or something like a brain injury or anything. You ain't know if I, I was aware of that. And the fact, for you to just come in and tackle me and take it out my hand. But yeah, that was a huge impact on me, because I felt like I was a prisoner. Like, who just runs up on somebody, and just tackles them like that? It just don't make no sense.

Disturbingly, experiences like those shared by Brandi and Sky were not rare. Even more troubling for Black girls is that the state of Michigan has one of the highest rates of school arrests for Black girls in the US wherein Black girls are *eight times* more likely to be arrested than white girls (Whitaker et al., 2019). Additionally, most security officers and school police are not trained to work with students and do not treat them as such (Whitaker et al., 2019). The experiences of actual interaction with school police and metal detectors were often used at the

CBO's conferences and within the demands of the collective to highlight the need to defund DPSCD-PD.

As a part of youth's own impact of what they heard from their peers, Nina shared an important inspiration that resulted in her emboldened Combahee solidarity. Nina discussed in her interview how stories such as Sky's, and Sky's older sister in the collective, further influenced her desire to fight against police in schools. Her influences from her peers in the collective were reflective of how by being in the YOC, they garnered collective organizing. Nina spoke to how she was directly impacted to want to be even more involved in the "counselors over cops" campaign when she referenced a conference where they talked about youth's experiences with police. Nina confidently stated that the conference was successful because of the story that Sky's older sister (not a participant in this study) shared when a cop inappropriately touched her. She recounted,

> she gave a story about a problem she had in school with an officer trying to tackle her and stuff like that because she was, like, fighting with somebody else. But, he inappropriately touched her and scared her basically. She started crying, like in front of everybody. Like, the whole place got emotional, and then Sky was telling her stories, and, like, everyone was inspired.

Nina's sharing of Sky and her older sister's experiences showcased the tactics of how the youth learned from one another about the inequities present in Detroit schools and leveraged these stories to bolster their campaigns (Carey et al. 2020; Hogan, 2019; Kolano & Davila, 2018). The youth would not only be personally influenced, but they also would want to take their learnings from their peers and uplift them to provide more data for their demands. At the end of the conference, Nina remembered how she was influenced too and loved when Sky and her sister

boldly stated, “We don’t need cops. We need counselors.” By witnessing and hearing such egregious experiences with the police from Sky and her older sister, Nina spoke to how she was more informed, and that influenced her to strengthen her Combahee solidarity with her peers because while she was aware of the over-policing of community members throughout Detroit, she did not have a personal encounter with the police herself. Yet, Nina could identify with the larger movement because of the love she had for peers and her desire to protect them.

In furthering their “counselors over cops” campaign, the YOC covered more ground due to their combined people power by pushing their campaign on social media, engaging their Detroit peers in their advocacy, and achieving some wins in their demands as noted in the vignette. Throughout the collective meetings in the summer of 2020, the collective created hashtags such as #defunddpscdpd and #counselorsnotcops (Fieldnote, June 2020) to garner greater attention towards reallocating the police budget in DPSCD to mental health resources. On June 17, 2020, the collective shared their wins after attending a virtual school board meeting earlier that week. They fought for and won a “safety committee” and an “oversight committee of police” to begin the work of defunding DPSCD-PD. While this was a win, the youth all shared how it was not enough. Youth and adult allies went into breakout rooms on Zoom and asked one another “What actions should we take to pressure the school board to defund 50% of the police budget? How can we leverage community power to hold the board accountable? Also, what education do organizations need around this issue?” Addressing these questions were part and parcel of their enactment of elevated centering. In this example, the questions they posed to one another were about what youth needed the most and how they could center their wellness and teachings to get more organizations on board with their campaign. In another instance of elevated centering, the YOC sought to make central not only their desire for defunding the police, but also their desire to

inspire more communities to want to join their defund DPSCD-PD campaign as well. Their efforts resulted in share outs where youth talked about what they each would do in their partner organizations to get their demands met; a significant part of how they utilized their YOC coalition. For example, one group shared how they would make a video about the effects of police in schools on youth to build awareness on social media and to better explain the need to defund police to parents and other teens. Altogether, these strategies and utilization of their people power were part and parcel of the youth's resistance, critical consciousness, and activism. They forwarded their organizing by sharing their experiences with one another and would locate the specificity of how race played a role in how some youth were even more vulnerable such as their decision to have predominantly Black youth speak at the rally for defunding police (Fieldnote, June 12, 2020).

Contending with Youth and Adult Divides in the Youth Organizing Collective. June 2020 proved to be an eventful month for the collective during which time they held their in-person rally and struggled through a contentious issue between adult allies and youth. In this month, the YOC was forced to confront their long-held issue on whether they were youth led or not. Once the youth had revamped their campaign to defund police in Detroit schools, the YOC began strategizing on how to mobilize around their demands and garner greater attention to their issue. Before the larger network's input about changing the essence of the campaign with the suggested change to "invest in safety", the adult allies in the YOC planned for youth to enact a "die-in" in front of the Detroit police department without the consent of the young people. The die-in is a form of protest where the youth were to lay still on the ground and hold signs that communicated police presence in schools was harmful to their mental health. The youth were not a part of this decision-making and, across several meetings, they worked through how these

decisions were made and how the youth collective would move forward. In a YOC meeting on June 3, 2020, the collective discussed the plan, and Brandi in response said, "I wasn't emotionally stable to do what we were planning to do and that was to go up to the police." Brandi, like some of her peers in Detroit, had experienced the protests where the police brutalized those who were marching for Black lives after the viral news of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery[16] in February 2020, Breonna Taylor in March 2020, and George Floyd[17] in May 2020. Across the country, and particularly in Detroit, youth were witnessing and protesting with other allied folks and were affected, of course, by such prominent clashes between police and activists. With keen understanding of these feelings across the YOC, Brandi asked the others how they felt, and they held similar overwhelmed feelings.

At a co-chair meeting six days later, Brandi and Dina were present and expressed further concerns and issues with how the die-in was selected as their form of protest. Below represents Brandi and Dina's back and forth with their concern of the YOC being youth led:

Brandi: [adult allies] say it's youth led but it's really not – is it youth led or not?

Dina: It's like youth *talking*.

Brandi: This has been going on since I joined in eighth grade and I'm a senior.

You feel me Dina?

Dina: Yeah and [the] problems could have been fixed if ya'll [adult allies] gave more information.

[16] Ahmaud Arbery was a 25-year-old Black man who was killed while jogging in his neighborhood in Georgia by white men on February 23, 2020. The men thought he looked "suspicious" and claimed to be making a citizen's arrest. Under past GA law, a citizen's arrest allows for private citizens to detain someone under reasonable suspicion.

[17] George Floyd was a 46-year-old Black man who was killed by police on May 25, 2020 by police after suspicion of using a counterfeit $20 bill. The video of his murder went viral after footage showed a white police office kneeling on Mr. Floyd's neck, while handcuffed, for 9 minutes.

After this co-chair meeting, the next day they went to the YOC and the youth ultimately decided they would not do the die-in because they were emotionally drained and did not feel comfortable confronting the police in that form of a demonstration. Dina facilitated this portion of the meeting and asked her peers how they were feeling about the defund police campaign, inquired if they were confused, and offered that if they did not want to be a part of the campaign, "that's 100% okay." Another youth in the YOC responded "it's a lot honestly," Dina agreed, and led the vote of not doing the die-in. This reflection and decision-making on part of the co-chairs and the larger YOC is a direct exemplification of the communal reflexive praxis principle. Youth centered their voice and their feelings to decide that the die-in was not the best form of protest for them and defended their decisions in their reflexive praxis with one another. Brandi and Dina began this process with each other in their co-chair meeting and brought it to the YOC so, collectively, they could take the time to assess what their next steps would be as youth who were ultimately the deciders on this issue. Moreover, in their communal reflexive praxis, youth led the questioning on if the YOC was youth led or not. In this instance of the die-in, the adults and youth worked together to get at the root of the issue and the youth decided on what ultimately affected them the most. The intergenerational component of the YOC proved to be particularly impactful in moments such as the one outlined above because youth and adults were able to lean into better youth-adult relationships that ultimately informed how they advanced their organizing efforts. Conversely, such divides were common and reoccurred after the die-in including in the continual planning of defunding DPSCD-PD. In this instance, the issue of youth ownership was questioned even more because of the politicized nature of the defund the police campaign which thwarted future efforts of the YOC (taken up more thoroughly in Chapter 6). Yet, youths' advocacy for one another within the YOC was also representative of their collective youth power

in how they navigated their self and social awareness as a part of SJYD, where they were keeping their collective a youth-led space.

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, the youth further showcased the principle of elevated centering and SJYD's social awareness by highlighting how they were personally and politically influenced not only by their personal experiences within Detroit schools, but also how they understood their shared struggles of being Detroit youth of color. They provided important analyses of how race, class, and place, were a part of their solidarity, global awareness—and more largely their Combahee solidarity—and how this advanced their organizing for educational justice in the city. Also, I leveraged the fluid principles presented throughout Chapters 4 and 5 in the defund DSPCD-PD case study with particular highlights of the fluid principles direct implications and salience in the YOC's organizing. Taken together, this chapter exemplifies the synergies of the collective organizer identity the youth developed given how race, class, and place were part of their collective identity and the ways in which this solidarity informed their organizing efforts. Illustrated in the case study, the synergies of youths' organizing and employment of the five fluid principles combined to influence how they navigated the varying tactics, strategies, and relationship-building among one another and how they repaired the harm of adult-centered decision-making.

In the next and final chapter, I analyze the "synergies of youth organizing" and what their influence on the located struggle in Detroit means for broader education policies. In addition, I interrogate how these synergies are connected with my fluid principles and highlight their implications for youth organizing through my larger conceptual framework of synergistic collective critical consciousness. Finally, I offer various learning opportunities and strategies

educational leaders, policymakers, and community members can glean from youth's educational justice, multiracial-multiethnic organizing.

Chapter 6 Analysis and Discussion

> "Community matters. Collectivity matters. To me that's the whole thing. And if we can't get along with each other, and we can't take responsibility for what we do with each other, then what the hell are we doing? ... that's the bottom line. If anybody is listening to this who is a young person working in this moment, please be part of the community of folks who are building an accountable community with each other."
>
> -Mariame Kaba (2021), *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*

Over the course of this critical qualitative study, I set out to document the skillful labor, love, care, and brilliance of the young people in the YOC. In her powerful book on abolitionist organizing, Kaba (2021) advised organizers to "… put your name on your shit" (p. 183) so that we do not write ourselves out of history. In the case of the young people I had the honor of organizing with, I assumed the responsibility of writing them into history through this dissertation. As I reflected on this study's larger aim of more deeply understanding how Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth came together as a part of a multiracial-multiethnic youth organizing collective, I recognized I needed to more fully illuminate several key factors. Initially in drafting this dissertation, one major key factor that was not hearkened on enough was centering how monumental the work was of the young people during one of the most impactful and devastating times of our lives in these global pandemics of COVID-19 and anti-Blackness. I was a bit bereft because I was trying to get through every day like everyone else and felt as though I, as a Detroit Vitality adult ally and participant-observer, did not have the time to really nestle in our organizing labor and the chaotic moment we were in (and still are facing). This dissertation allowed me to take some of that time back and hone in on a few critical realities. As I write this, organizers, activists, community members, and researchers across the globe are

speaking to how we are simultaneously living in a defining moment of history and constructing it. The world had been upended with COVID-19 and while some people were seeking to get back to a sense of normalcy, others were dreaming of a different reality. One that we have not quite seen in our time, such as a reality without policing; without the continual assault on Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian lives; and without the invisibilization of the ways in which our multiple identities such as our race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, and gender continually impact not only us as humans, but also the institutions that continue to interlock our oppressions for capital gains and power. As I have named these historic events happening in real time, the young people in Detroit were organizing for themselves, their communities, and for Detroit. I ask whoever is reading this to take a breath. Inhale deeply, think about all that we have endured in the global pandemic since 2020 and that, during all of this, youth were organizing everyday while attending virtual school and their own worlds were changing drastically in Detroit as they advocated for educational equity and justice. Audibly exhale, and please let that sink into your mind. For myself, upon this exhale, I center the key takeaways, findings, and contributions of this dissertation.

Foundational to this study and operationalized through the youth resistance methodological frame of this work is the meaning making and experiences of the youth who shared their time, energy, and experiences with me during one of the worst global pandemics of our time. First, I must state that I was only able to continue to learn from these brilliant youth after COVID-19 halted the world because of my rapport, history, and role as an adult ally in Detroit Vitality. I have an immense amount of gratitude to the youth organizing collective (YOC), the adult allies, and the Detroit Vitality network for continuing to allow me to conduct my study, while also contributing to their larger campaign goals as an adult ally. Of note, this

study provides important context and implications for the necessity of rapport and relationships in critical qualitative research because as COVID-19 typified, society and our contexts are constantly in flux. At the start of this study, along with everyone else in the world, I had no idea that a month into data collection all data would need to be acquired via Zoom and all the YOC's work would shift to meet the most immediate pandemic needs of Detroit youth and families. It is in consideration of this arduous context that this critical qualitative study is situated.

Before the pandemic, I planned to conduct my study in-person and collaboratively with youth organizers in the YOC. Specifically, I designed my study to work with youth to better grasp their processes and tactics, as well as to understand how they operated in a multiracial-multiethnic coalition for educational justice. During the pandemic, their work, and thus my data collection, wholly shifted to Zoom. I followed and collaborated with the YOC in their quests to continue to advocate for educational resources for themselves and their peers when all their schooling went online, and I observed them as they pursued their advocacy for their larger campaigns of youth voice and educational equity. Youth organizers in Detroit shifted to advocating for free Wi-Fi access and working computers, the reallocation of resources for greater mental health support for young people, and the push for the YOC's "counselors over cops" campaign during the reinvigorated Black Lives Matter movement in early 2020. Given Detroit communities' continual lack of access to educational leaders, the youth organizers leveraged their organizing towards obtaining more information about COVID-19 and virtual schooling by hosting live town halls with district leaders and local state representatives in Michigan. During this study, the collective very quickly became an integral site of information for young people throughout Detroit due to the YOC's previously formed relationships with stakeholders as

organizers in the city, as well as their already collectivized space, which allowed them to more swiftly respond to pandemic needs.

Highlighted in Chapter 2, the literature on how youth organizers in diverse coalitions are influenced when in community with other minoritized youth is sparse (Dobbie & Richards-Schuster, 2008; Watkins et al., 2007). Additionally, in the scholarship that does engage youth of color in organizing spaces with other marginalized young people, researchers often do not speak to the specific ways that youth engage in ethnic-racial conversations, choose organizing tactics in a diverse space, or prioritize and navigate different groups' needs in their organizing work. The youth involved in this work spoke at length about how they appreciated being in such a diverse collective, advocated for other youth organizing spaces to be diverse like the YOC, and asserted that they were greatly influenced by being in partnership with other youth of color throughout Detroit. Their understandings, assessments, and tactics were key findings in this work as youth of color articulated a synergistic collective critical consciousness where they upheld their personal political development, resistance, and their relational race organizing as a part of their activism.

Indeed, in my study young people explicated an emotionally intelligent and nuanced understanding of how their organizing and justice were tied to other youth of color throughout Detroit. They spoke to and enacted intricate notions of collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, holistic striving, elevated centering, and a Combahee solidarity that operated as the conduits to developing intimate, trusted, and protected relationships with one another. I posit, in the operationalization of the fluid principles of synergistic collective critical consciousness, young people curated a family-like coalition that was the foundation to youths' multiracial-multiethnic coalition building and organizing.

In the following sections of this chapter, I speak to ways that I extend my conceptual framework by highlighting this study's key findings from the lens of my synergistic collective critical consciousness (SCCC) framework's fluid principles. In these fluid principles I theorize and explicitly name processes of youths' multiracial-multiethnic coalition building. After I present my key findings interwoven from the fluid principles of SCCC, I propose my SCCC framework to the field of youth organizing and urban education. Finally, I close this chapter with necessary implications for the field of education that relate to methodology and cross-cultural youth organizing for advancing and humanizing urban education. The conclusion also offers insights to educational policymakers and leaders striving to be accountable to urban youth's needs and dreams for their schooling.

Extending the YOU DREAM Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of this dissertation, I connect each element of my conceptual framework to a corresponding fluid principle. In this extension, while I am detailing parallel conclusions and synergies between each fluid principle and conceptual framework piece for clarity, it by no means suggests that these parallels are perfectly symmetrical. In this, I mean that as the concept of fluidity indicates, these principles and frameworks can be addressed or connected in multiple ways across different contexts, and fluid principles may encapsulate multiple dimensions simultaneously (i.e., Combahee solidarity being exemplified in conjunction with holistic striving or communal reflexive praxis relating to indications of global awareness). Essentially, organizing and multiracial-multiethnic coalition building is muddied, but for this study's purpose and for coherence I connect each element of my framework to an extended fluid principle as follows:

Table 6-1: Conceptual Framework and Fluid Principle Connections

Conceptual Framework Elements (SJYD, Relational Race Framework, & Resistance Theory)		**Fluid Principles**
Self-Awareness	⟷	Collective Visioning
Social Awareness	⟷	Elevated Centering
Global Awareness	⟷	Combahee Solidarity
Relational Race	⟷	Communal Reflexive Praxis
Resistance	⟷	Holistic Striving

These dynamic connections reveal the synergistic collective critical consciousness garnered in the YOC.

Extending the Notion of Youths' Self, Social, and Global Awareness

Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) created the SJYD framework with youth workers and those who engage urban youth as the audience. In this positioning, Ginwright & Cammarota delved into the ways youth workers could engage youth in the three awareness lenses of self-awareness, social awareness, and global awareness. In my study, I found that while the adult allies were integral to the youth's development in these three areas, the young people themselves engaged in these processes collectively through their collective visioning, elevated centering, and Combahee solidarity. These three types of engagement were particularly salient in my study due to its ecological approach. In this approach, Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) argued that the contexts wherein urban youth are engaged and politicized have an important influence on their development and overall organizing. Similarly, I found that the cultural, historical, and class contexts of Detroit had important influence on how the youth in my study understood themselves as organizers and how they collaborated with other youth of color. Ginwright & Cammarota also posited that youth resist oppressive forces by forming alliances with other youth organizers in their fight for social justice. I extend their analyses by explaining how Black, Latinx, and Arab

American youth leveraged their connectedness of place and distinctness of their salient identities to form cross-cultural alliances and collectively navigate the synergistic contested terrains of urbanicity, neoliberalism, and educational inequity. Here is where my work has interesting and critical findings regarding how youth were informed by their Detroit context. In my conceptualizing, the synergistic collective critical consciousness framework highlights how youth influenced one another to build and garner a greater *collective* self, social, and global awareness.

Collective Self-Awareness Embedded in Youth's Collective Visioning. The youth organizers of color highlighted how they were accountable to themselves for the educational futures they wanted and were accountable to their larger community in Detroit. In Chapter 4, I explained that youth identified as changemakers and extended this identification to the visionary collective they created. In their collective visionary leadership they utilized emotional intelligence to underscore their reasons for organizing. They saw themselves interconnected within the YOC to jointly create change for the next generation, their families, and the larger community of Detroit. For instance, Amirah ardently stated that they would always fight for themselves, their city, and for their people. Similarly, Xiomara passionately expressed how she was intimately influenced by her undocumented status, and as a result, how she continuously advocated for greater access and equity for undocumented communities in all of the organizing in which she was involved. Relatedly, Dina showcased a self-awareness in her understanding that she had to represent her Yemeni-Muslim community and even more specifically, her cultural-gender identity. In her interview, she spoke about how she wanted to represent how other Yemeni girls could take charge of their education and demand more for their lives beyond

marriage. The youth mentioned here all exhibited a self-awareness that was informed by their different lived experiences throughout Detroit organizing as a YOC.

Freire (2014), in the final chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* writes, "the revolution is made neither by the leaders for the people, nor by the people for the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakable solidarity" (p. 129). While Freire delineates between people and leaders, I draw from Ella Baker's understanding that all must be leaders in the fight for justice and offer that people are leaders and leaders are people. In the case of the YOC, youth engaged in this unshakeable solidarity in their collective visioning. Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth in the YOC found ways to organize across ethnic-racial lines to rebel against the numerous atrocities pitted against them such as witnessing COVID-19 ravage their city due to decades-long neglect or the over-policing of Detroit students. In Dugan, Turman, and Torrez's (2015) chapter on the need for collective leadership they argue for leadership to be "… grounded in community, focused on the cultivation of collective capacities, and characterized by an unwavering emphasis on social justice" (p. 5). Together, I assert through the extension of self-awareness, youth develop a collective visioning that provided the fruitful grounding and goals for multiracial-multiethnic organizing.

Collective Social Awareness Embedded in Youth's Elevated Centering. Youth in this study, and in the larger YOC, enhanced and leveraged their criticality by being a part of their coalition. Ginwright & Cammarota (2002) argued that a necessary element of social awareness is teaching youth to think critically about the issues in their communities. Indeed, the adult allies were essential to the youth's learning and understanding of the social issues around them as young Detroiters of color in a low-income school district. The young people also acquired these learnings from one another and from their own lived experiences by establishing and leveraging

a "knowing" of inequity. This knowing of communities of color is a part of our lived experiences and the ways in which we have historically navigated various injustices intergenerationally. Moreover, this knowing is at the foundation of our counternarratives. Young people provided critical counternarratives of Detroit as a city full of love, community, and as Kendra simply said, "people power." They located the deficit on the neoliberal regime ever present throughout Detroit wherein injustices and inequities run rampant by education stakeholders with no ties to the city that the youth hold dear (Baldridge, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2019).

Youth of color in the YOC attributed their marginalization to racism and classism, but most of all to the impact of white supremacist influence on the decisions of local policies that affected them the most. For example, Brandi, Fatima, Xiomara, Dina, and Joe offered analysis of how their community did not have full access to their school's decision-making, but outside mostly white leaders did. This analysis is consistent with Waitoller & Radinsky's (2017) argument about neoliberal education reform wherein restructuring of community participation in a neoliberal urban education market "… acts as a structural manifestation of whiteness and the historical oppression of People of Color" (p. 150). Additionally, as Khalifa et al. (2016) found,

> policies and practices that regulate urban schools are often legislated at state or federal levels and are ostensibly general and thus applicable to all. But in reality, such policies and practices are intended to only impact areas in which there are strong negative stereotypes. (p. 20)

All of the young people in my study—and in the YOC, more generally—were keenly aware of how their participation and access to decision-making was inhibited due to being low-income Detroiters of color.

Moreover, the racial and placed storylines of Detroit were bred from a desire for "money" or from "ignorance" as Xiomara noted. She went further and stated that what Detroit was really lacking was money, and she challenged the harmful and stereotypical depiction of community members lacking humanity. With this point she added, "and ignorance to understand that we are lacking money, but they don't wanna listen to us." When I asked for her clarification on what she meant by ignorance and who was implicated in "they," she responded that ignorance was racism and they was "thee one percent … the wealthy people." Hence, in accounts like Xiomara's, which was on par with what the other youth of this study indicated to me, youth utilized a collective social awareness in their counter-stories and critical understanding of Detroit. They centered these complex realities of who and what was affecting their city and education and, together, framed their organizing from this critical lens.

Collective Global Awareness Embedded in Youth's Combahee Solidarity. Overall, the youth expressed a linked fate to one another as young people of color and saw the distinctness of each other's cultures and lived experiences. All the youth in this study spoke to the different ways they were impacted by being a part of their multiracial-multiethnic coalition. Pointedly, Dina discussed how an important element of being in a diverse coalition was the ability to build greater people power. As an example, in her interview with me she discussed how different organizations came together to support Palestinian liberation from Israel. She stated,

> Obviously, that's mainly impacting Middle Easterners and Palestinians, more specifically, but it is so important to have just diversity in that, right? Because if only Arabs know that and only Arabs are advocating, Arabs already know about that problem, you know? They already experience that problem. The only way to solve it is if, like,

there's more attention to that, and if one group already knows it, the only other way is to involve the other groups.

Dina articulated the need for people power when attempting to bring greater attention to a community's specific issues as well as the need to involve more co-conspirators (Love, 2019) to assist with their diverse social movements. This is similar to how in Chapter 4 Zara sought to raise awareness about the occupation of her Palestinian community by Israel to enhance her peers' understanding of her and her community. In the analysis above, Dina exhibited a global awareness in solidarity with Palestinians—a critical reflection that allowed her to empathize with the marginalization of other oppressed people (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002)—that was further informed by her involvement in the YOC and that she believed should be utilized to garner more power. Dina, and other youth, more than empathized with other marginalized peoples, but became involved in one another's movements because of their Combahee solidarity with one another. This solidarity was rooted in the interconnections of youths' salient identities, their intersectional ties of justice and liberation, and their advocacy as a youth organizing collective on the issues that were most important to them.

Youth also taught one another to be more globally aware by bringing their specific community's issues to the forefront in the YOC. In several YOC meetings, Xiomara gave updates about the impact of COVID-19 on the undocumented community, such as their lack of access to pandemic relief and their substantiated fears of deportation that prevented undocumented communities from seeking mutual-aid assistance. As another example, HOPE youth members both taught the YOC about the importance of having the Islamic holiday Eid on the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD) calendar and asked them to attend a virtual school board meeting in solidarity for their calendar campaign. HOPE youth members

also tapped into the YOC's network to provide greater awareness. With similar intentions, Black youth organizers, such as Sky, would often present about school police and her particular experiences of being policed and physically attacked by school security officers. Her predominantly Black neighborhood organization, ACT NOW, shared statistics about policing and the police presence in predominantly Black schools in DPSCD with the YOC. In all, by being a part of such a diverse coalition, the youth taught one another and advanced each other's global awareness that strengthened their Combahee solidarity. Youth held each other's salient identities (i.e., Black, Latinx, Arab American, undocumented, LGBTQ) in high regard when they organized to address community's specific needs together and for each other. Importantly, young people at such a formative time in their lives navigated varying issues and sometimes tensions because of their love and desire for broader Detroit to know "you are not alone," as Joe so beautifully stated.

Youth Organizers Relational Race Development Embedded in Communal Reflexive Praxis

Molina et al. (2020) argued that race is relationally formulated and contextualized by time and place. The youth organizers of color that I collaborated with spoke to this relational development in how they understood their shared struggles and how they were different, yet similar. The understanding of shared struggles was, in part, due to their peer learning with one another in their communal reflexive praxis. As discussed in Chapter 4, youth engaged in communal reflexivity with one another in the YOC to not only bridge their understandings and advocacy with one another, but also with their peers throughout Detroit. They used listening sessions to build greater youth power and, even while in the YOC, would find ways to understand each other more deeply when deciding on pertinent campaign issues and strategies. The time and place of their relational race development was also central because as a result of

being in the context of Detroit with prominent Black, Latinx, and Arab American communities, youth could glean more from one another due to the rich cultural history of Detroit and the fact that they were represented in the YOC. Moreover, the key feature of organizing spaces as politically educative was also paramount in how youth learned about salient issues within each ethnic-racial community and used communal reflexive praxis to better situate the collective in their organizing. While not always satisfactory, the youth kept coming back to the space of the YOC and worked to make it more inclusive by bringing in their wants and desires for growth through avenues like their workshops and collective meetings.

They noted that their similarities, in part, were due to their shared lived experience of being low-income Detroit youth of color. As Nina and Xiomara articulated, they could come together because of their "hood" connections and relation to being race(d), class(ed), and place(d) in ways that institutionalized their inequitable education. Using Molina et al.'s foundational understanding of how race is influenced by context in Chapters 4 and 5, I argued that youth's race was relationally developed by the context of Detroit and it further engendered their Combahee solidarity too. Chapter 5 highlighted how the YOC made space for the specific ethnic-racial needs of the youth and for the collective needs of addressing educational inequality in the city. Importantly, the youth's ethnic-racial identities tended to be the most salient but some of the youth also shared additional intersectional identities that influenced their educational experiences. For instance, Dina identified as a Yemeni-Muslim girl, Zara as a Palestinian-Jordanian young person in a predominantly Yemeni-Muslim charter school, Amirah as the only non-binary youth who used they/them pronouns, and Xiomara as an undocumented youth. To point attention to the ways race and gender interact for Black women, Crenshaw (1991) coined the term *intersectionality* and explored how "… the intersections of race and gender …

highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245). In a keynote address, Crenshaw clarified that intersectionality refers to "how structures make certain identities the consequence and the vehicle for vulnerability" (as cited in Hogan, 2019, p. 38).

Connectedly, the various identities of the members of the YOC were impacted by them being low-income students in Detroit and impacted how they came to their organizing and multiracial-multiethnic coalition building. Each of these youth noted that the context of Detroit and being youth of color, but also their other salient identities, informed their organizing and how they interacted with their peers in the YOC. Here, this study offers a more-nuanced understanding of how these youth organizers came to their education organizing and how they influenced—and were influenced by—their multiracial-multiethnic youth coalition that leveraged their collective youth power thus, exhibiting a Combahee solidarity.

A Collective Multiracial-Multiethnic Youth Resistance Embedded in Holistic Striving

Fine et al. (2014) asserted that resistance is an epistemology, visionary, and an applied theorization. In the context of this critical qualitative study, the youth and the larger YOC generated a collective resistance with one another through their relationship-building and holistic striving. I foreground that the relationships and holistic views that youth organizers of color built with each other were foundational to their multiracial-multiethnic organizing. During interviews, focus groups, and participant observations the youth spoke about the importance of relationship-building and the family-like atmosphere in the YOC. In all their interactions, the youth in the collective always created space and time for check-ins, checkouts, and icebreakers to further their learning of one another. This foundation—the family-like atmosphere that they cultivated in

the YOC—allowed them to build a collective resistance because they saw their organizing as a part of fighting for their family and the futures of those they held dear.

Noted in Chapter 2, "resistance is never pure" (Fine et al., 2014): In this lack of purity is where holistic striving is intimately implicated. While youth engendered a family within the YOC, they also disagreed or felt invisibilized like what happens sometimes within families. They had conflicts with one another and with the adult allies of the YOC when adults excluded them. The word "striving" in holistic striving is key when doing organizing work and liberation work. Striving inevitably comes with conflict, trauma, and pain. As depicted in Chapters 4 and 5, Detroit and communities like it are constantly surveilled, democratically constricted, and repressed. Yet, Detroit youth and communities still exuded a fiery resistance together. At the end of their interviews, each youth in this study confidently said to me that they wanted the larger public to know that they will not stop fighting for educational equity and justice. This pronouncement was in the midst of a pandemic, amid the fear-inducing lack of clarity of what was happening throughout the world, and with a contentious U.S. presidential election on the horizon. In the YOC, while not pure or perfect, youth built a collective resistance based on their understanding that together, they could continue to fight for and eventually accomplish their educational organizing dreams. They holistically strove to include one another, see one another, be with one another, and protect one another. I argue that all educational leaders should look to the youth's unwavering comradery as a damn beautiful exemplar. It is in this foundation of relationships that the YOC's collective resistance helped the young people feel that they could adequately advocate on behalf of the collective as well as uphold, as Xiomara proclaimed, an "I'm working for *us*" ethos.

Centering a Synergistic Collective Critical Consciousness for Urban Educational Justice

Based on the major findings and analyses of this critical qualitative study, I argue for a synergistic collective critical consciousness framework that is embodied by the five fluid principles discussed above and forefronts the relationships, skillsets, tactics, and navigation of youth of color who coalesce across various social identities to organize for urban educational justice. This framework bridges SJYD's self-awareness, social awareness, and global awareness to the relational understandings of race and ethnicity young people cultivate by being a part of a diverse coalition in an urban center. These contexts and experiences of young people of color then culminate into a collective multiracial-multiethnic youth resistance. Together, synergistic collective critical consciousness is operationalized by youth organizers of color through the five fluid principles of collective visioning, communal reflexive praxis, holistic striving, elevated centering, and Combahee solidarity.

I use "fluid principles" to explicate how the lived realities and needs of communities are ever changing and are dependent on time, place, and the different understandings and contestations of our social identities. While the young people did not always get it right or may have harmed one another along the way in their organizing, they always came back to the collective and tried again. They exemplify the beauty of humanity, the ability to work despite the difficulty, the grace even when harm is caused, and the love of community that kept them grounded. As stated by Kaba (2021), "it's only on the other side of folks who are interested in social transformation and change where failure is not supposed to be spoken about or a sign that you're horrible or that your ideas don't have merit" (p. 166). Kaba depicts a reality that is often not allowed to be discussed within justice work. On multiple accounts, failing is normative and social transformation and organizing is not done in a vacuum of perfection but rather an experiment built among collectives of people who are dedicated to the liberation of one another.

Similarly, I argue the young people strove to operate in the same fashion through enacting the fluid principles, analyzing themselves and our world, and kindling a racial relationality and collective resistance. Here, victory is not a particular campaign win or a policy changed in our determined democratic system, but in the dreaming and building with one another to think of and be a part of creating something anew. Below, I illustrate my synergistic collective critical consciousness framework from Chapter 2 with the additional fluid principles outlined above.

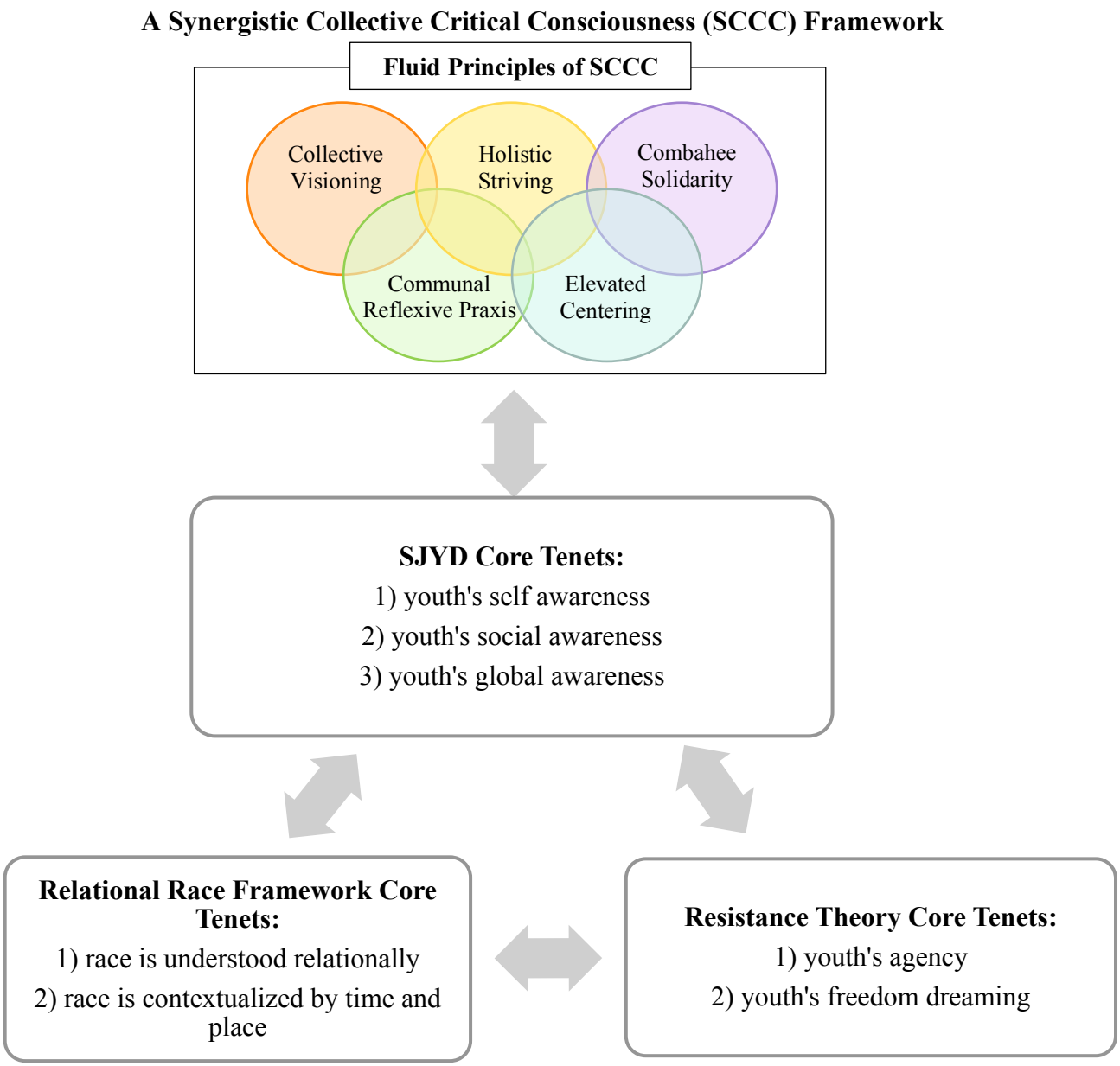

Figure 6-1: This is an illustration of my extended conceptual framework into a synergistic collective critical consciousness framework.

This framework elucidates the synergistic ways in which youth organizers of color are informed by being a part of multiracial-multiethnic coalitions and how they also inform their coalitions by being a youth organizer within them. Maintaining a collective critical consciousness that is synergistic is critical within this conceptualization. The synergistic element is important because it allows for the nuance, the failing, the joy, the success, and the combustion

that happens within organizing and justice work. Hence, synergistic is added to the terming of my framework because it is nestled in the complexity of humanity. Within the illustration above, this first assertion of how youth are informed and are informing the collectives they are within is a key aspect of their agency and freedom dreaming. They are agentic in that they elect to be a part of such a diverse coalition and are exerting their agency in collaboration with other youth of color. Youth organizers of color also share and formulate their own freedom dreaming and a collectivized freedom dreaming. The very fact that youth a part of a multiracial-multiethnic coalition believe they can make change in a society that continues to undermine their labor and dehumanize them is in and of itself freedom dreaming. Overall, their agency and freedom dreaming connects a resistance that is key to how they come to their coalition spaces as youth organizers of color. Furthermore, their developmental processes of understanding race and ethnicity relationally with other youth and harnessing their critical lenses is an iterative process that will continue to evolve as the youth get older.

I also offer that whether youth organizers of color continue in direct organizing or not, they will forever be impacted by these formative multiracial-multiethnic coalition building experiences in their adolescence. As the youth articulated, after being within the YOC they more pointedly thought about other communities outside of their own and believed that their justice was tied to greater justice within Detroit. This tie that the youth developed with one another can have impactful influences on how they continue to move forward in the world and the work they set out to do. Together, this framework has important implications for youth researchers, youth organizers, and those who truly want to work with marginalized young people in their fight for urban educational equity.

Implications

Multiracial-Multiethnic Youth Organizing Implications

Importantly, this study leveraged the vantage points of Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth organizers in Detroit. Molina et al. (2020) urged scholars to further explore ethnic-racial identities instead of solely grouping non-white communities as people of color. Having done so, my findings substantiate the claim that considering distinctions between the work and perspectives of Black, Latinx, and Arab American youth was critical to understanding their independent and collective organizing work. My findings also assert that while ethnic-racial identities were salient to the young people, other identities proved to be salient as well depending on the conversation, topic, or experience. These discoveries are important for how youth of color are engaged in educational organizing and how youth and their adult allies developed campaigns for the collective. In some instances, more specific organizing is necessary and warrants specified political education to the larger youth coalition. In other instances, more collective organizing for a broader shared issue such as educational inequality requires each ethnic-racial identity—and other salient identities—to not only be represented but explicitly engaged so that the coalition does not result in superficial inclusion. This work further reveals that representation is not enough when youth of color come together to make change, and that pointed attention to youth's experiences and identities are foundation to impactful multiracial-multiethnic coalition building. Specifically, adult allies could better support youth organizers in their labor of thick solidarity (Liu & Shange, 2018) that neither undermines their differences nor treats them as monolithic "youth of color." In this study, youth spoke to wanting to learn even more about each other's cultures and backgrounds, which I believe provides promising opportunities for intergenerational CBOs to cultivate greater connections among organizing labor. If young people had more chances to learn more deeply about one another's backgrounds they would not only

further garner "… an empathy that is inclusive and intersectional" (Liu & Shange, 2018, p. 195), but also would be better equipped to shape our future movements to be more deeply relational, holistic, and impactful.

Additionally, the support and critical advancement of youth work is needed. As discussed throughout Chapters 2, 4, and 5, adult allies were operating within a non-profit industrial complex that put their labor and relationships with youth at odds with the competing demands of larger community needs and non-profit status (Baldridge, 2020; Nygreen, 2017; Pérez, 2017; Rodriguez, 2017). As offered in the INCITE! *The Revolution Will Not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* book (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2017), activist scholars compel readers and organizers to think beyond funding and status in a non-profit world. They pose timely and critical questions about what activism and organizing looks like without the constant hamster wheel of seeking funding and having to abide by funding rules in order to maintain stability. The scholars also call on organizers to continue to push our current understandings into *dreaming* of our organizing labor as a part of grassroots community-building throughout the entire life cycle of our work and especially within our funding. They also note that these calls are immensely difficult.

As found in Detroit Vitality, the CBO provided important and needed resources to the communities throughout Detroit but were often stretched in many capacities because of the funding they were granted and the work that was needed to keep their funding. This resulted in relationship strain among organizers, especially within the YOC. Admittedly, I do not have the final answers to all of what I presented in this paragraph, as I myself am still grappling with what all these layers of neoliberalism, white supremacy, and capitalism mean to community organizing, but I can offer one thing. I deeply believe in the quote that is introduced at the

beginning of this chapter and that a critical strength the YOC has embodied is its curation of family and community. It is my deepest hope that the YOC can continue to be that light to remind us all that fundamentally, collectivity matters. Community matters. Ultimately, those of us in the fight for justice and liberation must always keep this unity at our core and continually work on our unlearning and healing.

Next, I outline what this all means for researchers who work with young people of color, educational policymakers and leaders, and urban education writ-large.

Methodological Implications

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter and in previous chapters, I was only able to work with the youth organizers in the CBO and YOC because of my four years of rapport building and background as a community organizer myself. Yet, that positionality also raises interesting questions and avenues for researchers. Prior to COVID-19, when Tera learned of my experiences as a college activist and organizer, she began to ask for more of my assistance in the YOC. As I began to assist more with the organizing of the youth and helped create political education workshops for the collective, I built even stronger partnerships with the youth. These relationships, and my own inclusion into their family-like atmosphere, allowed for the youth to see me beyond my researcher identity, and into more of both a mentor and a Black woman who was dedicated to their justice work.

My role as an adult ally and activist scholar in the YOC gave me access to information, dilemmas, joys, and family events that I would not have been privy to otherwise. Given this, I offer that activist scholars must have intimate ties to the work and the people with whom they are collaborating. In this case, having developed these ties allowed me to make more sense of the work of the youth and to speak more candidly with the young people because of my rapport and

identity as a Black woman organizer. Moreover, because I was an adult ally, it was important for me to share personal information about my life and myself as an organizer because that was the relationship-building culture of the YOC. Relatedly, Tillman (2006) argued, in her use of the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework, "… culturally sensitive research approaches not only recognize race and ethnicity, but position culture as central to the research process" (p. 265). She defines culture as "… a group's individual and collective ways of thinking, believing, and knowing, which includes their shared experiences, consciousness, skills, values, forms of expression, social institutions, and behaviors" (Tillman, 2002, p. 4). Similarly, Brandi's description of the "culture of community" as a key feature of the YOC was grounded in our ethnic-racial identities, connections to Detroit, relationship-building, and experiences as organizers. As a researcher and adult ally, my experiences in under-resourced schools in a predominantly low-income community of color in Southeast San Diego, California contributed to the youth's ability to see me as an adult ally to whom they could relate and with whom they could, therefore, share intimate details of their life.

Jointly, I assert, as other critical scholars have, that a more nuanced methodology of how researchers identify and their own lived experiences in relation to the work they study is of great importance (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Tillman, 2006; Villenas, 1966). The nuances are critical to research in all fields because our studies are often rife with complexity. As a part of human nature, we live lives full of contradictions and it is important now, more than ever, for our scholarship to better grasp the nuance or, as I call it, the "both/and." In a society that is even more diverse and riddled with so many intersecting calls for justice and liberation, we as scholars are responsible not only for how we enact our research, but also for how we come to it and engage with it from our various positionalities (Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Answering the Call: Learning from Youth Organizers of Color to Achieve Greater Educational Justice

In all the accounts of the youth organizers, they unequivocally argued for their voice and input to be central to the educational decisions made about and for them. They explained to me that at the root of most of their educational inequality in Detroit was how they, their families, and their communities were not involved in decision-making processes that directly affected them. All of the youth shared their frustration, and downright righteous anger, with how they had been intentionally excluded. In Sky's words, she said that leaders and policymakers let what her and her peers say, "go in one ear and out the other." Again, I want to note that *all* the youth in this study *and* in the YOC had various conversations and shared numerous accounts about inaccessible and unaccountable educational leaders. So, what does this insight mean for leaders and policymakers?

First, it means that educational leaders and policymakers should forefront an approach like that of youth resistance methodologies (Guishard & Tuck, 2014). Youth resistance methodologies have an epistemological stance in viewing young people as collaborators whose ideas are of merit and importance. They posit that young people should have the power to dictate endeavors that will impact them and, therefore, are youth-centered. It is in these *actions*, and not just words, educational leaders and policymakers should abide. Additionally, educational stakeholders *must* create partnerships with youth and communities—offering tangible opportunities to influence urban educational decisions. If leaders find that youth and their families are not represented, they must bring in these important stakeholders and educational leaders. If not, these adult leaders would not only be doing a disservice to the young people they are accountable to, but would also be complicit in urban educational inequity and injustice. As

Brandi instructed educational leaders, "… get more input like, if *you* just think it works, that ain't good. You gotta see who else like, you gotta get input from the students as well." Like Brandi, the youth organizers explicitly called for educational leaders to *listen* to them. Often, educational stakeholders ask one another what they can do to better serve students, and youth are screaming from outside of the metaphorical arena to *ask young people*, *listen to young people, and partner with young people*. Thus, it is crucial that educational leaders and policymakers create equitable processes that include young people and communities so that, together, they can generate policies and reforms that center the people they are intended to serve the most: youth.

"That's on Period": An Ode to the Youth Organizing Collective and their Dreams

Last, the final and most important intention of this research was to learn more about the dreams of the youth organizers. The youth organizers in the YOC shared their dreams with me and allowed me into their lives and organizing to have their voices heard. They requested that this research be used to advocate for their input in urban education and to share more broadly the organizing they were doing for collective educational justice. In all, the young people wanted the broader public to know that (1) their organizing was for themselves and for their Detroit communities; (2) as marginalized youth, they demanded to be listened to and positioned as collaborators if educational equity was to ever be achieved; and (3) they would not stop fighting for the educational justice they knew deep in their hearts Detroiters deserved. Together, the youth dreamt for a youth-centered education and to be seen and treated as human beings. They desired to be served as young people who wanted a quality education and to be presented with opportunities to pursue success in the ways they wanted and not in ways that were dictated to them. They wanted to be fully understood as young people who had critical hope, love, joy and as youth who needed mental health supports and educational equity. They aspired to be regarded

as youth of color who dreamed of an education of which they could be proud. And, finally, as some of the youth so pointedly shared with me, "that's on period[18]."

[18] "That's on period" is slang for resembling finality or emphasis to a point that was made. This insertion is also included as it was a running joke between Dina, Xiomara, Brandi, and me, and I dedicate this term to them.

Appendices

Appendix A

Youth Organizers Unifying Detroit and Reclaiming Education by Any Means YOU DREAM

Interview Protocol—YOUTH 14-18

NOTE: These questions are a pool of questions and prompts that can be asked over 1-2 interview sessions. All questions will not be needed given the semi-structured, conservational approach to the interview. Some issues may be naturally addressed by participants and in some cases, like if a participant is only available for one or two interviews.

Introduction for youth organizer: Please say your name; where you are originally from; what grade you are in; and your interests as it relates to your student activism.

Background:

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
    a. How long have you lived in Detroit/Dearborn?
    b. How long has your family lived in Detroit/Dearborn?
2. Tell me about your experience as a (identity) high school student? Does it influence how you are involved at school? Why or why not?
    a. What is your student involvement in high school?

Community:

3. How do you define and think about your community?
    a. What made you define and think about community in this way?
4. Can you tell me a little about your community [**name of community**]?
    a. Where do you live?
    b. How long have you lived there?
5. When you think about Detroit/Dearborn, how would you describe it and who would be included in it?
    a. Why are these people included?
6. What are some things you like about your community?
    a. Why did you pick those things?

Identity:

7. Do you identify with a race and if so, which one?
8. How do you identify?
9. How would you describe yourself?
10. What are you passionate about?
11. What do you want to do when you get older?

Perceptions of Detroit Schools:

12. Can you tell me about your school experiences in Detroit/Dearborn?
    a. What experience has stood out to you the most?
13. What do you like most about your schooling experiences?
    a. Why?
14. What do you dislike the most about your schooling experiences?
    a. Why?
15. Do you have any critiques of the current state of Detroit's schools?
    a. Why or why not?
16. If you could have it your way, what would the Detroit school's be like?
    a. Why?
17. What would a dream district be like for you?
    a. Why?

Politics & CBO:

18. How did you become involved with your partner organization and how did that then lead you to organizing with the CBO?
19. How does your involvement in your high school compare with your work in the CBO and your partner organization?
20. What do you hope to gain by being a part of the CBO?
    a. Do you feel like you have already gained some of these things?
        i. Why or why not?

General Impressions of the Youth Collective:

21. What are the major goals of the youth collective?
22. How does the youth collective accomplish these goals? What strategies do they use?
    a. Can you give an example of a success the collective has had that you've been a part of?
    b. Can you give an example of a challenge/conflict collective has faced that you've seen?
23. What do you think about the strategies used?

24. How would you describe your involvement or role within the collective?
    a. For how long?
    b. What are your favorite things about your experiences with the collective?
    c. Have you faced any challenges in working with the collective (your least favorite things, if any)?

Adult Ally Impressions:

25. How do you understand the roles of adult allies in the youth collective?
    a. Can you explain it to me?
26. What do you think the benefits and drawbacks are of having adult allies in the collective?
27. Is there anything you would like to change about the adult ally role given your experience?
    a. Why or why not?

Structure of the Youth Collective:

28. How do you understand how the collective was created with the different neighborhood organizations?
    a. Do you see the collective having a specific structure? If so, can you explain it to me?
        i. Have you been a part of similar structures in the past?
        ii. If not, why do you think that is?
    b. Do you know much about the CBO's partner organizations?
    c. Can you share what you know or questions you have about them?
29. How do you understand the structure of the collective?
30. What do you think about the structure of the collective?
31. Did you know about the structure prior to joining?
    a. **If so,** did it influence your choice to join?
    b. **If not**, do you think knowing about the structure before joining would have influenced your participation?

Youth Organizer Identity:

32. How would you define yourself? An activist? Youth organizer?
    a. Why the choice?
    b. What does being a [**title]** mean to you?
33. What made you become [**title**]?
34. Do you think you will continue some of your work as a **[title]** when you get older?
    a. Why or why not?

Multiracial-Multiethnic Coalition Building:

35. What do you think about the different racial and ethnic identities represented in the collective?
    a. Do you think that the representation in the collective influences your organizing?
        i. Why or why not?
36. What do you like most about the diversity of the collective, if at all?
37. What do you not like about the diversity of the collective, if at all?
38. Do you think you are learning from other cultures outside of your own by being a part of youth collective?
        i. Why or why not?
        ii. If so, in what ways?
39. Do you see the different racial and ethnic identities in the collective also in your personal and school life?
    a. If so, does this affect your life?
        i. Why or why not?
    b. If not, why do you think so?

Close Out:

40. If someone was interested in the activism you are a part of, what would you tell them they needed to be aware of?
    a. What advice would you give for aspiring youth activists?
41. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your activism or experiences within the collective?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol 2—YOUTH 14-18

Youth Organizers Unifying Detroit and Reclaiming Education by Any Means

YOU DREAM

NOTE: This protocol is after the first interview took place in early 2020. This protocol is to ask youth to assess their work over the year and the action phase.

Review of the Year:

1. Can you tell me about your past year in the collective?
    a. What have been your favorite experiences?
    b. What have your least favorite experiences?
2. Can you tell me about your participation in the collective over the year?
    a. **Probes:** Has your involvement stayed the same? Were there moments where your involvement dropped?
3. How do you feel after being a part of the collective for the past year?
    a. Why did you say these feelings?

Assessment of Goals:

4. What were your goals for the year?
    a. Do you feel like you accomplished them?
    b. Why or why not?
5. What were the goals of the collective?
    c. Do you feel like you all accomplished them?
        i. Why or why not?

Assessment of Coalition Building:

6. What have you liked most about the diversity in coalition within the youth collective, if at all?
7. What have been some challenges by being in a diverse coalition, if at all?

8. What are your thoughts about organizing with youth who live in different parts of Detroit or Dearborn?
9. Can you walk me through a time where you learned a lot by working with different racially and ethnically identified youth than you?
    a. Has this experience, or others, had an impact on you?
    b. Has this experience, or others, made you think about differently about an education issue or a particular group of people?

Assessment of the Organizing Cycle:

10. Can you tell me what you thought about the organizing cycle?
    a. What your favorite pieces of the cycle?
    b. What your least favorite pieces of the organizing cycle?
11. After being in the cycle, is there anything you would change?
    c. Add?
    d. Why or why not?
12. Describe the trainings and/or learning that have significantly influenced your educational advocacy/leadership efforts.
13. Please describe any other time you've had the chance to put your learning and training from the youth collective into action, if at all.

Reflections:

14. How do you think you have grown over the year in the collective?
    e. What did you learn about yourself?
    f. What did you learn about yourself as a youth organizer?
15. What have you learned about education reform from the youth collective?
16. What did you learn about your peers in the collective?
    g. How have these experiences with your peers influenced you? Or not?
17. Do you think you have changed personally because of your experiences over the past year?
    h. Why or why not?
    i. If so, in what ways?

Critical Consciousness, Resistance, and Dreams:

18. Can you describe your awareness of different political or educational issues since joining the collective?
    a. Do you think you are more critical or ask more questions about these issues since joining? Why or why not?
19. Do you think you have changed as a youth organizer? Why or why not?
20. What are you most hopeful for in your organizing? Why?
21. What keeps you in organizing?

22. What do you hope happens or changes in education as a result of your organizing/activism? Why?
23. If you could name or describe your biggest dream for Detroit and education what would it be? Why?
    a. What about for your peers and community?

Close Out:

24. What do you think is important for your community to know about your work over the past year?
    a. Why?
25. What do you want Detroit administrators and policymakers to know about your experience over the past year?
26. Is there anything else you think it is important for the wider public to know about your experiences as a youth organizer over the past year?

Appendix C

Identity Focus Group Protocol_—YOUTH 14-18

Youth Organizers Unifying Detroit and Reclaiming Education by Any Means

YOU DREAM

To be done with Black, Latinx, and Arab American groups separately.

Neighborhood Organization:

1. Can you describe your neighborhood organization?
    a. What do you like best about your neighborhood organization?
2. How did you all learn about the youth collective?
3. How does your work within the collective compare to or differ from the work you do in your neighborhood organizations?
4. How would you describe outside perceptions of your community?
    a. Does this influence your activism? Why or why not?

Experiences within the Youth Collective:

5. How do you feel your identities or experiences [as identity represented] is a part of the planning and organizing of the youth collective?
6. Are you happy with your representation?
    a. Why or why not?
7. Do you think you would get to connect with your peers without being in the collective?
    a. Why or why not?
    b.

Multiracial & Multiethnic Make up of the Youth Collective:

8. What do you all think about the different racial and ethnic identities within the youth collective?
9. Do you think it is important for youth organizing groups to be diverse like the youth collective? Why or why not?

Appendix D

Closeout Collective Focus Group Protocol_—YOUTH 14-18

Youth Organizers Unifying Detroit and Reclaiming Education by Any Means

YOU DREAM

This focus group is the last focus group/collective focus of the year after the identity focus groups.

Experiences over the past year:

1. Can you tell me about your experiences over the past year as a collective?
2. What have been the most impactful experiences or experience within the collective?
    a. *Probe*: How many agree with these experiences as the most impactful?
        i. Why or why not?
3. What were your favorite experiences as a collective?
    a. Why?
4. What were your least favorite experiences as a collective?
    a. Why?

Reflection of the Youth Collective:

5. After a year of organizing in the collective, what have you noticed about the collective overall?
6. Do you think you all reached your goals?
    a. Why or why not?
7. What differences would you offer for next year's organizing cycle?
8. What would you want to continue from your experiences in this year's organizing cycle?

Diversity of the Youth Collective:

9. How has the diversity of the youth collective influenced you, if at all?
10. Do you think the diversity of the youth collective influences your understanding of educational issues within Detroit?
    a. Why or why not?

Desires for External Learning:

11. What would you want adult allies to understand about your organizing in the collective?
12. What would you want educational leaders like the Superintendent or Secretary of Education to understand about your organizing in the collective?
13. What would you want your communities to understand about your organizing within the collective?

Close Out:

14. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences in the youth collective?

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